

ECONOMIC AND INDUSTRIAL LIFE AND RELATIONS

VOLUME I

By
M. K. GANDHI

Compiled and edited by
V. B. KHER



NAVAJIVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE
AHMEDABAD-14

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NAVAJIVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE
AHMEDABAD

First Edition, 3,000 Copies; January, 1957
Second Enlarged Edition 4,000 Copies, September, 1959

Rs. 3.50

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Printed and Published by Jivanji Dahyabhai Desai,
Navajivan Press, Ahmedabad-14

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

It is with very great pleasure and joy indeed that we issue this compilation of Gandhiji's writings on the subject of modern *Economic and Industrial Life and Relations*, edited by Shri V. B. Kher. The subject is now-a-days very much before the world's eye, particularly ours, thanks to the industrial and economic policy of the Government under their successive five year plans. Therefore the issue of the compilation is timely and, we hope it will serve the particular need of those who would care to know and plan according to the ideas and ideals the Father of the Nation taught us during the last generation.

In a way, it may be remarked — and rightly, that this is not the first book issued by us on this subject. Readers of Gandhiji know that we have already till now issued some books bearing on, and touching one or more aspects of, this vast and important theme — like *Cent Per Cent Swadeshi*, *Khadi — Why and How*, *Rebuilding Our Villages*, *Towards Non-violent Socialism* etc. This compilation distinguishes itself from them in that it tries to bring all the aspects of the case under one cover in a well-arranged and systematic way, and it is ably edited so as to bring out what exactly is the nature of Gandhiji's philosophy about the socio-economic and industrial problem of the modern world in general and of India in particular.

As the material that accumulated together in the hands of its careful and pains-taking editor, for presenting in one range and in their total view, Gandhiji's ideas on this problem, was voluminous, it was thought better to issue it in a few well-divided volumes. The erudite editor has taken care to do so in a noteworthy manner.

The whole matter has been arranged and collated under eighteen different sections with an exhaustive Introduction by the learned editor who knits them all together

and presents a clear pattern of Gandhiji's ideas, as they unfolded themselves during the course of his life-long endeavours to serve mankind through India where he was destined to work. These 18 sections have been suitably grouped to form 3 volumes of about 800 * pages in all.

The first volume deals with the fundamental principles of Gandhiji's economic and industrial philosophy. It covers first 4 sections of the compilation.

Swadeshi, according to Gandhiji, is a principle of man's economic duty and obligation to his neighbour. Thus understood, it is a human doctrine defining man's economic religion on earth. Gandhiji's views on the right pattern of economic and industrial organization, decentralization of economic power and production, Khadi and Village Industries etc. were derived from this fundamental doctrine. This broad aspect of his philosophy, with its derivatives — Khadi and Village Industries etc., is covered by the editor in the second volume which contains next 7 sections.

The entire dissertation of the problem is naturally in the background of Western industrialism which, all of us now admit, is a highly centralist doctrine of economic life and organization, thanks to modern science and technology and the imperialist trade and commerce and even politics which it has made possible. Under the British rule, we have had an ample taste of this way of economic and industrial organization, creating its own peculiar problems in its wake. Gandhiji touched them also and brought his unique weapon of Satyagraha to bear on them as a part of his general philosophy of Truth and Non-violence. This part of his ideas forms the third volume containing the remaining 7 sections.

Each of the three volumes is furnished with an index of its own. Its pages are also numbered separately.

The whole work of compilation is the labour of love by the editor. It has taken his precious few years to complete this self-ordained task. He chose to study Gandhiji's

* The present enlarged edition contains about 900 pages in all.

teachings on the subject in a scientific manner and undertook a research project for the same. The result is now being presented to readers. Shri Shankarlal Banker kindly undertook to write a Foreword to it, for which I am thankful to him. I also thank Shri V. B. Kher for giving this the result of his patient study to the Navajivan for publication. We issue it in the hope that it will help us at the present juncture in our national rebuilding and the world also to some extent which is, though unknowingly, in search of an economy of peace, both in the national and the international fields.

15-1-'57

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The first volume of *Economic and Industrial Life and Relations* describes the goal and the pathway to non-violent Socialism of Gandhiji's conception. The second volume is devoted to the economic teachings of Gandhiji. In the third volume his ideas and views on agrarian and industrial conditions and relations are set out. In these writings will be found the principles he enunciates and how they could be translated into practice and applied to the problems confronting us. In short, he shows the ways and means to reduce the ideal to the terms of the actual.

Besides Gandhiji's own articles, reports and accounts by others of his speeches and interviews from various sources are included in the book. The titles under which they originally appeared were not always designed to bring out the central theme of the subject; they largely indicated the question of the day. I have therefore, found it necessary to change many of the original titles.

I am grateful to Shri Shankarlalbhai Banker who has guided me in compilation of this work. He was one of the earliest and closest associates of Gandhiji in his political struggle and in his work among labour and for popularization of the Charkha. He was the first publisher of *Young*

India. He was one of the founder-members of the Textile Labour Union, Ahmedabad; and even today he is the real force behind it. Gandhiji selected him to be the first Secretary of the All-India Spinners' Association. In all these capacities, he had the unique opportunity to understand and imbibe the ideas of Gandhiji. He has laid me under a deep obligation by contributing a Foreword.

I am indebted to Shri Jivanjibhai Desai, Managing Trustee of the Navajivan Trust, for placing at my disposal files of *Young India* and *Harijan*. I desire to express my thanks also to my wife Indira for the assistance she rendered to me in copying the Introduction.

I acknowledge with thanks the permission from G. A. Natesan & Co. to quote freely from *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* (4th Edition). I have also to thank Shri D. G. Tendulkar for permission to quote from *Mahatma*, Volumes I, II, III & IV, Shri S. Radhakrishnan and his publishers, George, Allen & Unwin for permission to quote from *Mahatma Gandhi — Essays and Reflections on His Life and Work*, and Mr Vincent Sheean and his publishers, Cassel & Co. Ltd. for permission to quote from *Lead Kindly Light*. Acknowledgement is also made to *The Modern Review* for permission to quote from their October, 1935 number and *Amrit Bazar Patrika* for permission to quote from its August 2, 1934 issue.

Bombay, 27th June 1956

V. B. Kher

FOREWORD

The true measure of a great man is the effect his life and ideas have on the posterity. Judging by this test, Gandhiji will have to be classed as a *Yuga Purusha* — the Creator of the Age in which he lived. With the passage of time Gandhiji's ideas have attracted an ever broadening circle both in India and abroad. Our national and foreign policy derives its inspiration mainly from his teachings. But we are yet far from the vision he had about the Sarvodaya Samaj — the true Welfare State. History will unfold how we shall have to turn to this great teacher again and again for inspiration and guidance before we achieve this goal. He had thought deeply on many problems and experimented on not a few. The conclusions he arrived at were carefully worked out in his own life and effectively presented to the world through his various activities. His views on fundamental matters are, therefore, of great importance to us and their study cannot but benefit all.

Gandhiji was essentially a man of action. From the time he entered the arena of public activity, every moment of his life was devoted to the service of the Daridra-narayana, i.e. the poor and the suffering. And his complete identification, intimate contact and continuous work with them helped to rouse their consciousness and gave them strength and courage to strive and secure justice and better conditions of life for themselves. He drew inspiration from facts of life and reality, took stock of people's strength and weaknesses, their inherent inclination for good against evil, and their faith in the eternal laws of nature and this gave him a natural code of behaviour. He viewed life as a whole and not in fragments and has, therefore, given us a lead on all the different aspects that make up life. A quintessence of his basic ideals is embodied in the rules he adopted for the inmates of his Ashram.

A careful study of his writings on economic and political subjects discloses the common ideas which underlie his views on the different aspects of life. The emphasis may differ according to the circumstances but the basic ideas germinate from the same source — his intense and active love for the suffering humanity and his unflinching adherence to the fundamental principles of Truth and Non-violence as the legitimate means for achieving the objects in view.

Gandhiji was a born optimist. And his love for humanity included even the evil-doer since, according to him, no man is inherently wicked though he may be a victim of his environment or circumstances. He taught people to distinguish between the evil in a man as distinct from the man. He was, therefore, able to enthuse the people to fight the foreign Government for its wickedness and yet have regard and consideration for those who carried on its administration. This applies also to his attitude towards Princes, zamindars and the wealthy persons whose arrogance and ostentation of power and authority he condemned, but as men, he had no hesitation in befriending them.

People know him essentially as a political leader, a spiritual thinker and a constructive social reformer. But very few know that he was intimately connected with industrial and labour problems. People in foreign countries know very little about Gandhiji's contribution in this field. This volume is best suited to remove this ignorance.

The editor has rendered a valuable service to the public and especially to students of Gandhiji's teachings by bringing together in three volumes his views on socio-economic and industrial problems. This volume has been compiled after a critical study of Gandhiji's writings on the subject and it will serve as a very useful guide to all those who seek inspiration and enlightenment from Gandhiji for a solution of these problems. As the editor has stated in his Introduction, "Great injustice is done to Gandhiji's ideas in general due to ignorance." The effort

made to present his writings in a systematic manner so as to bring out clearly his views on various aspects of this subject will make it easy for people to follow them. Gandhiji was a dynamic personality. His ideas appear to have undergone a change from time to time though his belief in the fundamentals of life never changed or diminished. This collection enables one, because of the thought and care with which the writings are arranged, to note the developments that have taken place in his ideas in the course of the manifold activities in which he participated during his lifetime.

I congratulate Shri Kher for the great pains he has taken to offer to the reader a systematic and critical treatise on Gandhiji's views. From a mass of extensive material in the form of speeches and writings spread over a long period, he has selected, analysed and presented the relevant matter in a manner that would help the reader in understanding them in their true and proper bearings, and we have now, as a result, for ready reference a valuable publication in the Master's own words on many important aspects of our life. I commend this book to all those who wish to make a study of Gandhiji's thoughts and teachings, and especially to the social workers interested in the establishment of a just order of society striving for the good of all.

Ahmedabad, 23-3-'56

Shankarlal G. Banker

GLOSSARY

- Ahimsa* — non-violence ; love
Aparigraha — non-possession
Ashram — a place of spiritual retirement ; a hermitage ; a place for study and disciplining life
Ashramite — a member of the Ashram
Bhagawadgita — (popularly known as Gita), a part of the great Hindu epic Mahabharata wherein Krishna is the divine hero
Bhandar — store ; shop ; depot
Bhangi — a scavenger
Bigha — measure of land, $1\frac{1}{2}$ bighas being equal to an acre
Brahma — the Lord of Creation
Brahmacharya — continence ; celibacy ; self-control ; also the first stage of a Savarna Hindu's [usually referred to as द्विज (Dwija) in religious texts] religious life
Brahmana — the first or the highest of the four castes sanctioned by the Hindu religion (literally, one who knows Brahman)
 — see Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shoodra
Chapati — thin, flat unleavened bread made of wheat flour
Chaprasi — peon ; office-boy ; attendant
Cowrie — a shell once used as a coin
Daridranarayana — the poor, the dispossessed in whom dwells God according to Gandhiji
Dharmaraj — a righteous kingdom
Dubla — an aboriginal tribe of Gujarat
Duragraha — insistence on wrong ; clinging to evil, as opposed to Satyagraha
Durbar — court of ruler ; grand levee held by a Prince or Governor
Ekadashi — eleventh day of both halves of a Hindu lunar month, usually observed as a fast by the orthodox
Fakir — a Muslim ascetic
Ganapati — Hindu God of learning
Ghee — clarified butter
Goonda — hooligan
Goondalism — hooliganism ; lawlessness
Gram — village
Guru — a preceptor ; a teacher
Gunatita — freed from qualities
Harijan — literally a man of God ; an untouchable ; a term first used for untouchables by Gandhiji ; also refers to the weekly *Harijan* founded by Gandhiji in February 1933
Hartal — temporary suspension of business or work as a mark of protest or mourning

- Ishopanishad* — one of the principal Upanishads expounding Indian philosophy
- Ji* — an affix added to names denoting respect, e.g. Gandhiji
- Kaliyuga* — according to Hindu mythology there have been four Ages since the beginning of time, viz. सत्ययुग (Satyayuga), त्रेतायुग (Tretayuga), द्वापरयुग (Dwaparayuga), and कलियुग (Kaliyuga), the present Yuga, the Age of universal degeneracy
- Khaddar* or *Khadi* — hand-spun, hand-woven cloth
- Kisan* — a peasant
- Kshatriya* — the second of the four castes sanctioned by the Hindu religion (the warrior caste) — see Brahmana, Vaishya and Shoodra
- Lokamanya* — respected by the people ; an honorific title conferred by the people on the late Bal Gangadhar Tilak
- Lungoti* — used herein in the sense of a small piece of cloth worn by the poorest of the poor in India to cover their nakedness
- Maharaja* — ruler
- Mahavrata*s — primary vows undertaken by the devout
- Mahayajna* — primary sacrifice, according to the Vedic idea of a *yajna* or a religious sacrifice performed to gain some noble and altruistic objective
- Musalman*, *Muslim* — follower of Islam ; belonging to Islam
- Navab* — Muslim ruler ; the term is now used to denote a person indulging in a luxurious life of a feudal ruler
- Niyama* — observance
- Om* — Hindu mystic syllable
- Panchayat* — a village council of elected members or elders
- Pariah* — an out-caste
- Parsi* — follower of Zoroastrianism
- Pavitra* — holy
- Purushartha* — one's own endeavour
- Raj* — rule
- Raja* — ruler
- Ramanuji* — follower of Ramanuja, founder of one of the six systems of Hindu philosophy who lived in the 11th century
- Ramarajya* — kingdom of Rama which was known for its beneficent and just rule ; now used to mean any just rule working for the good of the people
- Ravana* — the ten-headed demon who is the villain of Ramayana, the Hindu epic
- Roti* — bread ; flat, unleavened bread
- Ryot* — Indian peasant
- Sadavrat* — place where alms or food is distributed free to the poor

- Sadhu* — person leading the life of an ascetic ; ascetic
- Safai* — sanitation ; cleaning
- Saheb* — friend ; master ; lord ; God ; also a term of respect ; an European or a white man
- Sannyasa* — renunciation of worldly life ; the last stage of a Savarna Hindu's religious life
- Sannyasi* — one who has taken Sannyasa
- Sardar* — nobleman ; an honorific title conferred by the people on the late Vallabhbhai Patel ; also a labour contractor
- Sarvodaya* — literally, the welfare of all ; the title of the book under which *Unto This Last* by Ruskin was translated into Gujarati by Gandhiji
- Sattvika* — virtuous ; pure ; there are supposed to be three qualities or attributes that may be predicated of all existing things, viz. *Sattva* i.e. goodness or purity ; *rajas* i.e. passion or activity ; and *tamas* i.e. darkness or stolidity
- Satyagraha* — literally, insistence on truth, clinging to truth ; soul-force ; truth-force
- Satyagrahi* — one practising Satyagraha
- Satyayuga* — the Age of Truth
- Savarna* — of high caste
- Shoodra* or *Shudra* — the last of the four castes sanctioned by the Hindu religion (the caste of labourers) ; see Brahmana, Kshatriya and Vaishya
- Sikh* — follower of the religion founded by Guru Nanak
- Swadeshi* — belonging to or made in one's own country
- Taluka* — sub-division of a district
- Tapasya* or *Tapashcharya* — penance
- Vaishya* — the third of the four castes sanctioned by the Hindu religion (caste of traders and agriculturists) ; see Brahmana, Kshatriya and Shoodra
- Varna* — caste ; occupational division of the Hindu society
- Varnashram* — the system of four castes (based on occupations) and four stages of life (called Ashramas) for the first three castes (Brahmana, Kshatriya and Vaishya), namely, ब्रह्मचर्य— Brahmacharya (Student's stage), गृहस्थ— Grihas-tha (house-holder's stage), वानप्रस्थ— Vanaprastha (forest-dweller's stage) and संन्यास— Sannyasa (stage of a recluse) sanctioned by the Hindu religion.
- Vedas* — the sacred scriptures of the Hindus
- Vedic* — of Vedas
- Vyavahar* — operations or affairs of the world
- Yajna* — religious sacrifice
- Yama* — cardinal restraint
- Zamindar* — landlord

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INTRODUCTION

“ And finally, Mahatma Gandhi will remain — personally I am convinced of this — a very great historical figure for still another reason : that he stands precisely and exactly on the threshold between two very different ages. On the one hand, Gandhi incarnates India's traditional idea of a saint, but on the other hand, he belongs to the most modern type of mass-leader. To that extent, his historical position seems similar to that of John the Baptist. Very likely, the one-sided type of saint will no longer play a part in that future state of man which I have often described as the ‘ œcumenic ’ state, the part he has played in the past : a new synthesis of the Cross and the Eagle will be its cardinal sign. The new examples of man will be the complete man in whom the forces of the spirit and the earth balance each other. But the advent of this new example will have been prepared, more than by any other living man, by the great dweller on the threshold, whose name is Gandhi.” *

— Count Hermann Keyserling

Gandhi was a complex and an enigmatic phenomenon. He embodied in himself the dual roles of a saint and a mass-leader. Such a combination seems unbelievable but Gandhi was nothing if not amazing ! Throughout the long history of religions, the spiritual values were normally restricted to the monastic order. The traditional beliefs considered religion and *vyavahara* as two separate spheres having no mutual relation. Gandhiji was perhaps the first historical figure to challenge the artificial separation of these vital phases in human life. He introduced into the ordinary life of the work-a-day world the spiritual values. That such a great scholar and leader of Lokamanya Tilak's stature should cling to the orthodox view shows how the traditional beliefs die hard. This malaise in society appears evidently to be deep-seated. Gandhiji battled against this irrational and unfounded belief. Joining issue with Lokamanya on the latter's statement, “ Politics is a game of worldly people and not of Sadhus,” he wrote :

“ With deference to the Lokamanya, I venture to say that it betrays mental laziness to think that the world is not for Sadhus. The

* *Mahatma Gandhi — Essays and Reflections on His Life and Work*, Edited by S. Radhakrishnan (George, Allen & Unwin), p. 169.

epitome of all religions is to promote *purushartha*, and *purushartha* is nothing but a desperate attempt to become Sadhu i.e. to become a gentleman in every sense of the term. Finally, when I wrote the sentence about 'everything being fair in politics' according to Lokamanya's creed, I had in mind his oft-repeated quotation शठं प्रति शाठ्यम्. To me it enunciates bad law. And I shall not despair of the Lokamanya with all his acumen agreeably surprising India one day with a philosophical dissertation proving the falsity of the doctrine. In any case I pit the experience of a third of a century against the doctrine underlying शठं प्रति शाठ्यम्. The true law is शठं प्रत्यपि सत्यम्."†

A Practical Idealist:—If the above quotation gives the reader the impression that Gandhiji was a visionary, it would be absolutely incorrect. Gandhiji was no visionary. He claimed that he was a practical idealist.‡

Ignorance of Gandhiji's Ideas:—Great injustice is done to Gandhiji's ideas in general due to ignorance. Many of us have vague notions about Gandhiji's opinions on different matters. This ignorance is not confined to the layman alone ; it is prevalent even among the learned. This state of things can be ascribed to the absence of a scientific study of his teachings.

How to Study His Teachings:—For a scientific study of Gandhiji's teachings, the best method is to arrange his utterances or writings in a chronological order and try to relate them to the circumstances in relation to which they

† *Young India*, 28-1-'20: The literal translation of the words शठं प्रति शाठ्यम् is "pay back the rogue in his own coin". However, Gandhiji enjoins truthfulness even towards a rogue (शठं प्रत्यपि सत्यम्).

Expression is given to the same thought in the Dhammapada by the All-Enlightened Buddha in the following soulful verses:

न हि वैरेण वैरानि सम्मन्तीथ कुदाचनं ।

अवैरेण च सम्मन्ति एस धम्मो सनन्तनो ॥

Hatred does not cease by hatred ; hatred ceases only by love. This is the eternal law.

अक्कोधेन जिने कोधं असाधुं साधुना जिने ।

जिने कदरियं दानेन सच्चेनालिकवादिनं ॥

Let a man overcome hatred by kindness, evil by goodness, greed by generosity, and lies by telling the truth.

‡ *Young India*, 11-8-'20.

were spoken or written. Each utterance would then be viewed in its proper context. By adopting this procedure we shall be able to find out how his ideas on a particular subject have changed over a course of years. In some cases we may discover that his ideas have not undergone any appreciable change. On the other hand, we may find that while the connotation of certain terms has changed for him, his fundamental beliefs have remained substantially unaltered.

In the teachings of any great figure like Gandhiji, we necessarily discover a permanent element which concerns the whole humanity and another portion which concerns the special conditions of the time to which it relates. We must try to keep the permanent and the impermanent aspects of the teachings separate so that there is no distortion in our balanced evaluation of their relative importance. This distinction between the two aspects of the teachings will be discussed later particularly in relation to Gandhiji's economic ideas which were specially concerned with the conditions of India in the twentieth century.

Character of His Idealism

Main Springs of His Idealism :— Here we shall examine the character of his idealism. Whether we study his religious views or his idealism in the social, political and economic spheres, we find some principles which are common to all of them. Briefly summarized these principles are as under :

The ideal in its absolute form is an abstraction like the Euclid's point which is incapable of being drawn by human agency. The ideal is similarly unattainable. The same thought is expressed in poetic form in the following lines :

“ A man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Else what is heaven for ? ”

Having ascertained the ideal, it is our bounden duty to set about reducing it to practice to the extent of our capacity. Just because the ideal is unattainable, should we cease to strive for its realization ? The path may be beset

with many difficulties. But we must endeavour like a man. This is *purushartha*. Satisfaction lies in the effort and not in the attainment. "It is better to travel hopefully than to arrive." We must concern ourselves with the conservation of the means and their progressive use. The progress towards the goal will be in exact proportion to the purity of the means. This method appears to be too long but it is the shortest.

The ideal because of its boundlessness appears to recede from us the nearer we go to it. But we must remember that the darkest hour of the night is nearest the dawn. If we make right efforts we will go a long way towards our ideal and that progress will be real.

Limitations of Human Nature:—When Gandhiji advises us to cling to the ideal, does he recognize and take into consideration the full limitations of human nature? Or does he merely cherish any false hopes regarding human nature? His attitude is summed up in the following extract :

"It is true that I have often been let down. Many have deceived me and many have been found wanting. But I do not repent of my association with them. For I know how to non-co-operate, as I know how to co-operate. The most practical, the most dignified way of going on in the world is to take people at their word, when you have no positive reason to the contrary." §

Distinction between an Individual and a System:—His faith in human nature was genuine. It never dimmed even under the strain of a crisis. He believed in the basic goodness of a human being, and so he considered no man as beyond redemption. The wrong-doer is often the tool of a system or a victim of the circumstances. Hence the necessity of observing the distinction between the system and the man. The wrong-doer must not be regarded as an enemy. He may be brought to the right path not merely by verbal persuasion but if required, by non-violent non-co-operation which is an effective remedy. This might involve suffering on one's part to awaken the wrong-doer to his sense of guilt and to wash it away by sincere tears

§ *Young India*, 26-12-'24.

of repentance. So a wicked system must be destroyed and not the individual. This way you do not estrange an opponent. There is a chance of your winning him over to work with you for a common end.

Faith in Human Nature :— His undying faith in the goodness of man and the efficacy of non-violence is well brought out in his reply to Shri Jaiprakash Narayan who put before Gandhiji his ideal of Indian independence. He wrote :

“ Perhaps Shri Jaiprakash has no faith in the princes automatically surrendering their autocracy. I have. First because they are just as good human beings as we are, and secondly, because of my belief in the potency of genuine non-violence.” *

To have faith in human nature, one must have faith in himself and his cause. Who can doubt that Gandhiji had both these in ample measure? Gandhiji has been fully vindicated by the later events. We have witnessed before our eyes the impressive spectacle of the willing surrender of authority on the part of princes to the democratically elected representatives of the people. To a question by a foreign visitor whether the English would leave India peacefully as a result of his non-violent agitation, his answer was a firm ‘Yes’. “What is the basis of your belief?” was the natural supplementary question of the foreigner. “I base my faith in God and His justice” was the reply.† In his own life, Gandhiji achieved the independence for India without firing a shot. The English left the shores of India after effecting a peaceful transfer of power to Indians. These are but two examples. The life of Gandhiji is replete with countless incidents which show that to the cold calculating man of everyday world, his attitude appears risky and foolhardy. But he seldom failed to achieve success. He who runs through the pages of India’s recent history will find ample testimony to the truth of this statement.

The non-violence of Gandhiji required acceptance of human beings with their imperfections. Naturally, if a

* *Harijan*, 20-4-'40.

† *Harijan*, 13-2-'37.

weaker person cannot keep pace with you and lags behind, allowance has to be made for him. But what compromise can there be on principles? Obviously none, in regard to basic things. There one must be firm as a rock. Further, there cannot be any compromise with the evil. But one must not be inflexible. Weakness or surrender on matter of principles is not advised or encouraged. At the same time care must be taken to see that every trifle is not dignified into a principle. Light is thrown on the conditions which Gandhiji considered essential for a compromise, in the following passage :

“Indeed, life is made of such compromises. Ahimsa, simply because it is purest, unselfish love often demands such compromises. The conditions are imperative. There should be no self in one’s action, no fear, no untruth and it must be in furtherance of the cause of Ahimsa. The compromise must be natural to oneself, not imposed from without.” ‡

Political Idealism :— Before we proceed to analyse the structure of his Swaraj or Home Rule in concrete terms, it will be apposite to plumb the mainspring of his political idealism. The political *guru* of Gandhiji, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, in the original preamble to the constitution of the Servants of India Society, written by him in 1905, had given expression to the necessity of spiritualizing public life. And emphasis was put by him on dedication to the service of the country in the spirit in which religious work is undertaken. The tradition of Gokhale was continued by his disciple. Why was Gandhiji in politics? This query is answered by him thus :

“To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics, and I can say without the slightest hesitation and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.” §

Religion and Politics :— Religion and politics cannot be divorced. The latter is devoid of life without the former. Shorn of religion, politics is empty and meaningless :

‡ *Harijan*, 17-10-'36.

§ M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, p. 615 (1948 Edition).

“I have no desire for the perishable kingdom of earth. I am striving for the kingdom of heaven, which is spiritual deliverance. For me the road to salvation lies through incessant toil in the service of my country and of humanity. I want to identify myself with everything that lives. In the language of Gita, I want to live at peace with both friend and foe. So my patriotism is for me a stage on my journey to the land of eternal freedom and peace. Thus it will be seen that for me there is no politics devoid of religion. They subserve religion. Politics bereft of religion are a death-trap because they kill the soul.” *

One of the foreign Christian leaders who came for discussion with Gandhiji in December 1938, questioned him as to what was the fundamental motive in the work which he had done for India. Was it social or political or religious? “Purely religious,” replied Gandhiji. That was the very question asked him by the late Mr. Montagu when he accompanied a deputation which was purely political. “How you, a social reformer,” he exclaimed, “have found your way into this crowd?” Gandhiji’s reply was that it was only an extension of his social activity. He could not be leading a religious life, unless he identified himself with the whole of mankind, and that he could not do unless he took part in politics. The whole gamut of man’s activities today constitutes an indivisible whole. One cannot divide social, economic, political and purely religious work into watertight compartments. He did not know any religion apart from human activity. It provides a moral basis to all other activities which they would otherwise lack, reducing life to a maze of ‘sound and fury signifying nothing’.[†]

Meaning of Religion :— The term “religion” is here used in the sense of eternal values and not the dogmas of any religion. The catholicity of Gandhiji’s outlook in matters religious, and his tolerance of other’s views is well-known. God to him was Truth and Truth was God. Religion is the human recognition of superhuman controlling power i.e. God. What did Gandhiji understand by God?

* *Young India*, 3-4-’24.

† *Harijan*, 24-12-’38.

“If it is possible for the human tongue to give the fullest description of God, I have come to the conclusion that God is Truth. Two years ago, I went a step further and said that Truth is God. You will see the fine distinction between the two statements, ‘God is Truth’ and ‘Truth is God’. I came to that conclusion after a continuous and relentless search after truth which began fifty years ago. I then found that the nearest approach to truth was through love. But I also found that love has many meanings in the English language, and that human love in the sense of passion could become a degrading thing. I found too that love in the sense of Ahimsa had a limited number of votaries in the world. But I never found a double meaning in connection with truth and even atheists had not demurred to the necessity of power of truth. But in their passion for discovering truth, atheists have not hesitated to deny the very existence of God—from their own point of view rightly. It was because of this reasoning that I saw that rather than say God is Truth, I should say that Truth is God.” ‡

He thus explained his concept of God. The boldness and independence of the religious spirit in him is apparent in every word that fell from his lips.

Swaraj

The Swaraj He Strove for:—The story of Gandhiji’s transformation from a loyal citizen of the British Empire to a rebel preaching the seditious doctrine of British rule being responsible for the political, economic, social and cultural ruin of India, is recent history. The Swaraj that he dedicated his whole life to bring into being was not of a negative character. Mere transference of power to India was not his idea of Swaraj. It was only the first step. Everyone knows that on the 15th August 1947, when the last personal representative of the Imperial Crown made over the reins of government to the Indian National Government, while the whole nation went mad with joy and wore an appearance of festivity, the sage of Wardha was sad and eating out his heart in a heroic effort to quell the flames of communal passion, hatred and strife which stalked through the land.

Meaning of Swaraj:—Swaraj is that condition in which people learn to rule themselves. Such Swaraj has to be experienced by each individual :

‡ D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. III, p. 176.

“Swaraj really means self-control. Only he is capable of control who observes the rule of morality, does not cheat or give up truth and does his duty to his parents, wife and children, servants and neighbours. Such a man is in enjoyment of Swaraj, no matter where he lives. A State enjoys Swaraj if it can boast of a large number of such good citizens.” §

Individual, the Corner-stone of His Swaraj:—The individual is the corner-stone of the edifice of his Swaraj. He is to equip and educate himself truly to become a good citizen, when he enjoys Swaraj. Society is an aggregation of individuals. It creates a State to govern and to administer law. Now, that State which consists of a large number of good citizens can claim to be in possession of Swaraj. Swaraj can be maintained, only when there is a majority of loyal and patriotic people to whom the good of the nation is paramount above all other considerations including their personal profit.* Without such a condition, even if a people were to enjoy political self-government, they are not free. The importance of political independence is not minimized. Of course, Gandhiji was conscious that every country must have political freedom; that it is not right for one people to rule another; that foreign rule is an evil. Therefore, he wanted political freedom for India. But he was shrewd enough to see that all would not be well by a miracle when the British quitted India. The condition of Europe was a warning to him. It convinced him that mere self-rule does not produce the conditions in which the people rule themselves. They continue to be crushed under the heels of the few. So he wrote :

“No mere transference of political power in India will satisfy my ambition, even though I hold such transference to be a vital necessity of Indian national life. The people of Europe have no doubt political power but no Swaraj, Asian and African races are exploited for their partial benefit, and they, on their part, are being exploited by the ruling class or caste under the sacred name of democracy. At the root, therefore, the disease appears to be the same as in India.” †

§ M. K. Gandhi, A Paraphrase of Ruskin's *Unto This Last* in the Chapter entitled “Conclusion”, p. 65.

* *Young India*, 28-7-'21.

† *Young India*, 3-9-'25.

This shows that he was not satisfied only with the government of the people ; but he wanted government for the people and by the people.

Classes and Masses under Swaraj:— Under Swaraj, the interest of the masses must prevail over the interest of the few. Swaraj cannot be the monopoly or the hunting ground of the vested interests. In the final analysis, everything must be subordinated to the interests of the masses in any scheme of Swaraj. “Every interest, that is hostile to the interest of the dumb millions must be revised, or must subside if it is not capable of revision.” ‡ This is not to say that all other classes—the middle class, the capitalist or zamindar—must go under. “All that it aims at is that all other classes must subserve the interest of the poor.” §

Government by the People:— We next come to the question ‘What is government by the people?’ Gandhiji answered this question thus :

“By Swaraj, I mean the government of India by the consent of the people as ascertained by the largest number of the adult population, male or female, native born or domiciled, who have contributed by manual labour to the service of the State and who have taken the trouble of having their names registered as voters. I hope to demonstrate that real Swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when abused. In other words, Swaraj is to be attained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority.” *

Vigilance by Citizens:— Where the citizens are vigilant about their liberty and freedom, the State will not be the dispenser for all the needs of the people nor will it usurp authority from the people to whom it rightfully belongs. “Self-government means continuous effort to be independent of government control, whether it is foreign government or whether it is national. Swaraj will be a sorry affair if people look up to it for the regulation of every detail of life.” †

‡ *Young India*, 17-9-'31.

§ *Young India*, 16-4-'31.

* *Young India*, 29-1-'25.

† *Young India*, 6-8-'25.

That Government is the Best which Governs the Least :— Where political power is in the hands of the enlightened and educated and disciplined masses who have learnt to regulate and control authority, there is no fear that the State will either become tyrannical or that it will so entrench itself that it will hinder the march towards the ideal of a classless society in which the State withers away. The following words affirm the faith of Gandhiji in the enlightened democracy where the common man has come into his own :

“To me political power is not an end but one of the means of enabling people to better their condition in every department of life. Political power means capacity to regulate national life through national representatives. If national life becomes so perfect as to become self-regulated, no representation becomes necessary. There is then a state of enlightened anarchy. In such a state everyone is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour. In the ideal State, therefore, there is no political power because there is no State. But the ideal is never fully realized in life. Hence the classical statement of Thoreau that that government is the best which governs the least.” ‡

“This means that when people come into possession of political power, the interference with the freedom of people is reduced to a minimum. In other words, a nation that runs its affairs smoothly and effectively without much State interference is truly democratic. Where such a condition is absent, the form of government is democratic only in name.” §

True Democracy :— True democracy as visualized by Gandhiji will be a republic of innumerable village *panchayats*. Why does he insist on village as the unit of administration ? Here is the answer in his own words :

“Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus every village will be a republic or *panchayat* having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. It will be trained and prepared to perish in the attempt to defend itself against any onslaught from without. Thus, ultimately, it is the individual who is the unit. This does not exclude dependence on and willing help from neighbours. It will

‡ *Young India*, 2-7-'31.

§ *Harijan*, 11-1-'36.

be free and voluntary play of mutual forces. Such a society is necessarily highly cultured in which every man and woman knows what he or she wants and, what is more, knows that no one should want anything that others cannot have with equal labour."

Subordination of Selfish Interests:—"In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units."*

An Ideal Village:—"An ideal Indian village will be so constructed as to lend itself to perfect sanitation. It will have cottages with sufficient light and ventilation, built of a material obtainable within a radius of five miles of it. The cottages will have courtyards enabling the householders to plant vegetables for domestic use and to house their cattle. The village lanes and streets will be free of all avoidable dust. It will have wells according to its needs and accessible to all. It will have houses of worship for all, also a common meeting place, a village common for grazing its cattle, a co-operative dairy, primary and secondary schools in which industrial education will be the central factor, and it will have village *panchayats* for settling disputes. It will produce its own grains, vegetables and fruit, and its own Khadi."†

Equality under Panchayat Raj:—In such *Panchayat Raj*, there would be equality—social, economic, political and religious—between the humblest and lowest and the tallest in the land; the dignity of labour would be highly prized; citizens would earn an honest living; intoxicants like opium and liquor would be abolished; Swadeshi would become a rule of life; women would be emancipated and would hold a place of respect and citizens would be prepared to defend non-violently truth and also to lay down their lives if occasion demands it. These are the pillars which sustain the structure of the republic of villages.

Would such a republic maintain an army? Would it be compatible with moral freedom? To Gandhiji 'moral

* *Harijan*, 28-7-'46.

† D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. IV, p. 144.

freedom' means "freedom from armed defence forces". His definition of moral freedom is this :

"My conception of Ramarajya excludes replacement of the British army by a national army of occupation. A country that is governed by even its national army can never be morally free and, therefore, its so-called weakest member can never rise to his full moral height." ‡

Army of India of the Future:—It should be noted that Gandhiji is opposed to the army of occupation even though it is national. But he would not mind having an army of volunteers which is utilized for policing India as will be clear from the following extract :

"I do not know of the navy but I do know that the army of India of the future will not consist of hirelings to be utilized for keeping India under subjection and for depriving other nations of their liberty, but it would be largely cut down, will consist largely of volunteers and will be utilized for policing India." §

On the eve of the Cabinet Mission's visit to India in 1946, Gandhiji warned the country that on attainment of freedom, if she attempted to become a military power, she would have to remain content with becoming a fifth-rate power in the world without a message. By refining and continuing her non-violent policy, she could use her precious freedom for the delivery of the earth from the burden under which she was being crushed and thus set an example to the world.*

Differences between Gandhian Idealism and the Socialist and Communist Idealism

Socialism, Implicit in Ishopanishad:—How does the nature of Gandhiji's idealism differ from that of the Socialist and the Communist idealism? In order to understand the differences between the former and the latter, we must know what Gandhiji's views on Socialism are. Gandhiji claimed to be a Socialist long before 'Socialism' from the Occident found its way into India. He accepted the theory of Socialists even while he was in South Africa. But his

‡ *Harijan*, 5-5-'46.

§ *Young India*, 9-3-'22.

* *Harijan*, 5-5-'46.

Socialism was natural to him ; it was derived from his own experience and observation and not adopted from any book. It came out of his unshakable belief in non-violence. At this stage, he parts company with the Western Socialists. Gandhiji said :

“ Socialism was not born with the discovery of the misuse of capital by capitalists. As I have contended, Socialism, even Communism is explicit in the first verse of Ishopanishad. What is true is that when some reformers lost faith in the method of conversion, the technique of what is known as scientific Socialism was born. I am engaged in solving the same problem that faces scientific Socialists. It is true, however, that my approach is always and only through unadulterated non-violence.” †

Common Goal :— Gandhiji shares with the Communists the common ideal of a “ classless society in which the State has withered away ”. The paths shown by them are, however, diametrically opposite. So they part from the commencement of the journey. Let us understand Gandhiji’s opposition to Socialism and Communism of the Western brand.

Means :— He observed : “ My opposition to the Socialists and others consists in attacking violence as a means of effecting any lasting reform.” ‡

“ Communism of the Russian type, that is, Communism which is imposed on a people, would be repugnant to India. I believe in non-violent Communism. If Communism came without any violence, it would be welcome.” §

Whilst Gandhiji had the greatest admiration for the self-denial and spirit of sacrifice of the Socialists he had never concealed the sharp difference between their method and his. They frankly believed in violence and all that it connotes. He believed in non-violence through and through.* “ India must indeed have Swaraj but she must have it by righteous methods ”, he said, for Swaraj

† *Harijan*, 20-2-'37.

‡ *Harijan*, 1-6-'47.

§ *Harijan*, 13-2-'37.

* *Harijan*, 4-8-'46.

which is real cannot be attained by violence.† Even if he was assured that India could have independence by means of violence, he would refuse to have it. It would not be real independence.‡ Warfare could give India another rule for the English rule, but not self-rule in terms of the masses.§ That nothing enduring can ever be built on violence was his firm conviction.* Physical force is transitory even as the body is transitory.

When Swaraj is attained by violence, the power passes into the hands of the few persons who have brought about the revolution. This is an inescapable result. "He that wields the sword shall perish by the sword" was not spoken in vain by Jesus. Consider only one instance of Italy. This is the description of what happened after the war of Italian independence :

"If you believe that because Italians rule Italy, the Italian nation is happy, you are groping in darkness. Mazzini has shown conclusively that Italy did not become free. Victor Emanuel gave one meaning to the expression, Mazzini gave another. According to Emanuel, Cavour and even Garibaldi, Italy meant the King of Italy and his henchmen. According to Mazzini, it meant the whole of the Italian people, that is, its agriculturists. Emanuel was only its servant. The Italy of Mazzini still remains in a state of slavery. The working classes in that land are still unhappy. They, therefore, indulge in assassination, rise in revolt, and rebellion on their part is always expected. What substantial gain did Italy obtain after the withdrawal of the Austrian troops ? The gain was only nominal. The condition of the people in Italy still remains the same. I am sure you do not wish to reproduce such a condition in India. I believe that you want the millions to be happy, not that you want the reins of Government in your hands. If that be so, we have to consider only one thing : how can the millions obtain self-rule ? " † †

The Communist Thesis :—The Communists argue that they are all practical men having no use for utopian

† M. K. Gandhi, A Paraphrase of Ruskin's *Unto This Last*, Chap. entitled "Conclusions".

‡ *Harijan*, 13-2-'37.

§ *Young India*, 21-5-'25.

* *Young India*, 15-11-'28.

† † M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, Chap. XV.

ideas. They want the Socialist revolution to alter human nature as it is now. Men live more by habit than by will. That being so, it is necessary to use force to alter present habits. In course of time, people will grow accustomed to observe the new values, of learning to work for human society instead of one's selfish interests and exploitation of others as in a capitalist society. In order to bring this kind of order into existence, the proletariat has to capture the present State authority by violence. The substitution of a proletarian State for the capitalist State is deemed to be impossible without a violent uprising. The proletariat is but a foothold to press on with the radical cleansing of society from all exploitation. Use of violence is sanctioned until the last vestige of capitalist exploitation is abolished and liquidated. The proletarian State is conceived as a transitional stage, as the first phase. The ultimate phase is the withering away of the State which is expected to follow as a result of the process of radical transformation set in motion and the new values which are to be inculcated among the people.

Dictatorship, an Instrument of Tyranny :—The whole thesis of the Communist theory is challenged by Gandhiji. He questions the premiss that violence can ever lead us to the goal of political anarchy. He has no faith in a dictatorship, proletariat or benevolent. It will be an instrument of tyranny in the hands of the dictator. He is, therefore, not prepared to entrust the dictator or the State with such sweeping powers. In other words, he is not prepared to sacrifice the masses at the altar of totalitarianism of any kind. While admitting that man actually lives by habit, he feels that man can develop his will to an extent so as to forge a non-violent, moral sanction for reducing exploitation to the minimum. The process may be slow but ultimate victory is assured, as surely as the triumph of the fabled tortoise over the hare. Finally, Gandhiji's Swaraj is not for any particular section or sections of the population; there is room in it for all. There is, however, one important proviso — all classes will have to subserve the interest of the masses.

It will be interesting to study Gandhiji's answers to the propositions in his own words :

Gandhiji's Answers to the Communist Thesis :—

I. The Importance of the Purity of Means :

1. "Socialism is a beautiful word and, so far as I am aware, in Socialism all the members of the society are equal—none low, none high. In individual body the head is not high because it is the top of the body nor are the soles of the feet low because they touch the earth. Even as members of individual body are equal, so are the members of the society. This is Socialism.

"This Socialism is as pure as crystal. It, therefore, requires crystal-like means to achieve it. Impure means result in an impure end. Hence the prince and the peasant will not be equalized by cutting off the prince's head, nor can the process of cutting off equalize the employer and the employed. One cannot reach truth by untruthfulness. Truthful conduct alone can reach truth. Are not non-violence and truth twins? The answer is an emphatic 'no'. Non-violence is embedded in truth and vice versa. Hence has it been said that they are faces of the same coin. Either is inseparable from the other. Read the coin either way. The spelling of words will be different. The value is the same. This blessed state is unattainable without perfect purity. Harbour impurity of mind or body and you have untruth and violence in you.

"Therefore only truthful, non-violent and pure-hearted Socialists will be able to establish a socialistic society in India and the world. To my knowledge there is no country in the world which is purely socialistic. Without the means described above, the existence of such a society is impossible." ‡

2. "The clearest possible definition of the goal and its appreciation would fail to take us there if we do not know and utilize the means of achieving it. I have, therefore, concerned myself principally with the conservation of the means and their progressive use. I know that if we can take care of them, attainment of the goal is assured. I feel, too, that our progress towards the goal will be in exact proportion to the purity of our means.... We know that the princes, the zamindars and those who depend for their existence upon the exploitation of the masses would cease to fear and distrust us if we could but ensure the innocence of our methods. We do not seek to coerce any. We seek to convert them. This method may appear to be long, perhaps too long, but I am convinced that it is the shortest." §

‡ *Harijan*, 13-7-'47.

§ D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. III, p. 376.

3. "Of course, here comes in the difference of our emphasis on the methods or the means which to me are just as important as the goal, and in a sense, more important in that we have some control over them; whereas we have none over the goal, if we lose control over the means." *

4. "Now about secret methods, I am as firm as ever that they must be tabooed. I am myself unable to make any exceptions. Secrecy has caused much mischief and if it is not put down with a firm hand, it may ruin the movement. There may be exceptional circumstances that may warrant secret methods. I would forego that advantage, for the sake of the masses whom we want to educate in fearlessness. I will not confuse their minds by leading them to think that under certain circumstances, they may resort to secret methods. Secrecy is inimical to the growth of the spirit of civil resistance." †

5. "I do not appreciate any underground activity. I know that millions cannot go underground. Millions need not. A select few men may fancy that they will bring Swaraj to the millions by secretly directing their activity. Will this not be spoon-feeding? Only open challenge and open activity is for all to follow. Real Swaraj must be felt by all—man, woman and child. To labour for that consummation is true revolution. India has become a pattern for all exploited races of the earth, because India's has been an open, unarmed effort which demands sacrifice from all without inflicting injury on the usurper. The millions in India would not have been awakened but for the open, unarmed struggle. Every deviation from the straight path has meant a temporary arrest of the evolutionary revolution." ‡

6. "I must confess that I have not yet been able fully to understand the meaning of Bolshevism. All that I know is that it aims at the abolition of the institution of private property. This is only an application of the ethical idea of non-possession in the realm of economics and if the people adopted this ideal of their own accord or could be made to accept it by means of peaceful persuasion, there would be nothing like it. But from what I know of Bolshevism, it not only does not preclude the use of force but freely sanctions it for the expropriation of private property and maintaining the collective State ownership of the same. And if that is so, I have no hesitation in saying that the Bolshevik regime in its present form cannot last long. For it is my firm conviction that nothing enduring can be built on violence." §

* D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. III, p. 384.

† *Ibid*, p. 377.

‡ *Harijan*, 3-3-'46.

§ *Young India*, 15-11-'28.

II. Evils of Dictatorship and State Socialism :

7. "I cannot accept benevolent or any other dictatorship. Neither will the rich vanish nor will the poor be protected. Some rich men will certainly be killed out and some poor men will be spoonfed. As a class, the rich will remain and the poor also in spite of dictatorship labelled benevolent. The real remedy lies in non-violent democracy, otherwise spelt true education of all. The rich should be taught the doctrine of stewardship and the poor that of self-help." *

8. "My Socialism means 'even unto this last'. I do not want to rise on the ashes of the blind, the deaf and the dumb. In their Socialism, probably these have no place. Their one aim is material progress. For instance, America aims at having a car for every citizen. I do not. I want freedom for the full expression of my personality. I must be free to build a staircase to Sirius if I want to. That does not mean that I want to do any such thing. Under the other Socialism, there is no individual freedom. You own nothing, not even your body." †

III. Learning to Live by Will Instead of by Habit :

9. "While admitting that man actually lives by habit, I hold that it is better for him to live by the exercise of will. I also believe that men are capable of developing their will to an extent that will reduce exploitation to a minimum. I look upon the increase in the power of the State with greatest fear, because although while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality which lies at the root of all progress." ‡

10. "In order to reach this state §, we may not look on things philosophically and say that we need not make a move until all are converted to Socialism. Without changing our life we may go on giving addresses, forming parties and hawk-like seize the game when it comes our way. This is no Socialism. The more we treat it as game to be seized, the further it must recede from us.

"Socialism begins with the first convert. If there is one such, you can add zeros to the one and the first zero will account for ten and every addition will account for ten times the previous number. If, however, the beginning is a zero, in other words, no one makes the beginning, multiplicity of zeros will also produce zero value. Time and paper occupied in writing will be so much waste." **

* *Harijan*, 8-6-'40.

† *Harijan*, 4-8-'46.

‡ *The Modern Review*, October 1935.

§ i.e. Socialism.

** *Harijan*, 13-7-'47.

11. "It may be asked whether history at any time records such a change in human nature. Such changes have certainly taken place in individuals. One may not perhaps be able to point to them in a whole society. But this only means that up till now there has never been an experiment on a large scale on non-violence. Somehow or other the wrong belief has taken possession of us that Ahimsa is pre-eminently a weapon for individuals and its use should, therefore, be limited to that sphere. In fact this is not the case. Ahimsa is definitely an attribute of society. To convince people of this truth is at once my effort and experiment." †

IV. The Gandhian Way — Education and Satyagraha :

12. "The pilgrimage to Swaraj is a painful climb. It requires attention to details. It means vast organizing ability, it means penetration into the villages solely for the service of the villagers. In other words, it means national education, i.e. education of the masses. It means an awakening of national consciousness amongst the masses. It will not spring like the magician's mango. It will grow almost unperceived like the banian tree. A bloody revolution will never perform the trick." ‡

13. "But it must be realized that the reform cannot be rushed. If it is to be brought about by non-violent means, it can only be done by education both of the haves and the have-nots. The former should be assured that there never will be force used against them. The have-nots must be educated to know that no one can really compel them to do anything against their will, and they can secure their freedom by learning the art of non-violence, i.e. self-suffering. If the end in view is to be achieved, the education I have adumbrated has to be commenced now. An atmosphere of mutual respect and trust has to be established as the preliminary step. There can then be no violent conflict between the classes and the masses." §

14. "The aim of the non-violent worker must ever be to convert. He may not however, wait endlessly. When, therefore, the limit is reached, he takes risks and conceives plans of active Satyagraha which may mean civil disobedience and the like. His patience is never exhausted to the point of giving up his creed." *

15. "No man could be actively non-violent and not rise against social injustice, no matter where it occurred. Unfortunately, Western Socialists have, so far as I know, believed in the necessity of violence for enforcing socialistic doctrines. I have always held that social justice, even unto the least and the

† *Harijan*, 25-8-'40.

‡ *Young India*, 21-5-'25.

§ *Harijan*, 20-4-'40.

* *Young India*, 6-2-'30.

lowliest, is impossible of attainment by force. I have further believed that it is possible by proper training of the lowliest by non-violent means to secure redress of the wrongs suffered by them. That means is non-violent non-co-operation. At times, non-co-operation becomes as much a duty as co-operation. No one is bound to co-operate in one's own undoing or slavery. Freedom received through the effort of others, however benevolent, cannot be retained when such effort is withdrawn. In other words, such freedom is not real freedom. But the lowliest can feel its glow as soon as they learn the art of attaining it through non-violent non-co-operation." †

16. "This, I do say, fearlessly and firmly, that every worthy object can be achieved by the use of Satyagraha. It is the highest and infallible means, the greatest force. Socialism will not be reached by any other means. Satyagraha can rid society of all evils, political, economic and moral." ‡

The solution propounded by Gandhiji for ushering in an era of Socialism, is twofold: (1) the education of the masses and (2) Satyagraha. The former is a long-term process while the latter is a summary and effective remedy for the redress of grievances.

True Nature of Satyagraha:—The true nature of Satyagraha was described years ago by Gopal Krishna Gokhale as "being essentially defensive in its nature and it fights with moral and spiritual weapons... fights tyranny by undergoing suffering in his own person. He pits soul force against brute force; he pits the divine in man against the brute in man; he pits suffering against oppression, pits conscience against might, faith against injustice, right against wrong". Satyagraha or truth force includes all non-violent resistance for the vindication of truth. Non-co-operation and civil disobedience or civil resistance, both individual and mass, are branches of Satyagraha. All these plants in the garden of non-violence are from the same parent viz., Satyagraha. The space here does not permit the discussion of their nature and application. All of them are, however, harmless. Some are less powerful than others but they have to be handled skilfully.

† *Harijan*, 20-4-'40.

‡ *Harijan*, 20-7-'40.

And all of them may not be used simultaneously. Satyagraha, it will thus be seen, is not conceived as a weapon of the weak. Defeat has no place in the dictionary of a Satyagrahi.

Differences on the Plane of Practical Politics :— On the plane of practical politics, Gandhiji's opposition to the policies of the Indian Socialists and Communists was based on sound, solid and realistic grounds. While welcoming the rise of the socialist party in the Congress in 1934, he did not favour their programme for the following reasons : (i) it ignored Indian conditions ; (ii) there was an assumption underlying many of its propositions which showed that there was necessarily an antithesis between the classes and the masses or the labourers and the capitalists and they could never work for mutual good ; (iii) undue stress was laid on the rights of workers without any reference to their duties ; (iv) that as a body they were in a hurry ; (v) the Socialists put an emphasis on the results whereas Gandhiji put it on the means.

All these reasons applied more forcefully to the Indian Communists. The Communists did not " make any distinctions between fair and foul, truth and falsehood ". Secondly, they had extra-territorial loyalties. This is most humiliating to Gandhiji's notions of self-respect and dignity. An independent country which depends on foreign charity, does not deserve to exist. The same applies to foreign ideologies. They are acceptable to him to the extent that they can be assimilated and adapted to the Indian conditions.

Bread Labour

The Fundamental Law of Our Being :— In the *Panchayat Raj* of Gandhiji's conception, a citizen is expected to earn an honest living by the sweat of his brow. After reading *Unto This Last* by Ruskin, Gandhiji had begun to pay homage to the principle of manual labour. This assumed the form of a law for him after he had become familiar with the works of Tolstoy. That, to live, every man and woman must work and earn his bread by labour-

ing with his hands, was propounded by a Russian writer named T. M. Bondaref. Tolstoy adopted this law and gave it wide publicity. The idea behind this law is that “every healthy individual must labour enough for his food and his intellectual faculties must be exercised not in order to obtain a living or amass a fortune but only in the service of mankind.” § This is the fundamental law of our being.

Teachings of *Unto This Last* :—Bread labour may take the form of any useful bodily labour. The teachings of *Unto This Last* served as guidance to Gandhiji in these matters, which, as understood by him, were :

(A) “That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.

(B) That a lawyer’s work has the same value as the barber’s inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.

(C) That a life of labour i.e. the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living.” *

Agriculture, the Ideal :—Truly speaking, bread labour can be related to agriculture alone. But since everybody is not in a position to take to it, a person can spin or weave or take to carpentry or smithery instead of tilling the soil. Agriculture is however regarded as the ideal. Again, every one must be his own scavenger and must dispose of his own waste. In other words, the manufacture of everything needed to satisfy essential human wants and labour in all essential occupations count as bread labour.

Essential Conditions :—There is no merit in physical labour by itself. Work can be regarded and rendered as a task of hard drudgery from which no pleasure or interest is derived. This is a state of slavery. The first essential condition of bread labour, therefore, is that, it must be voluntary. Most persons will not employ themselves in work for the sake of it. They would lack the incentive to work if there was no need to work for their bread. Like Gandhiji, one must become a labourer by choice and not by force of circumstances.

§ *Hairjan*, 14-11-’48.

* M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, Part IV, Chap. XVIII.

“Compulsory obedience to a master,” observed Gandhiji, “is a state of slavery, willing obedience to one’s father is the glory of sonship. Similarly compulsory obedience to the law of bread labour breeds poverty, disease and discontent. It is a state of slavery. Willing obedience to it brings contentment and health.” †

The second characteristic of bread labour is that it is intelligent. There is no divorce between intelligence and labour. The failure to observe this principle has resulted in criminal negligence of villages in India.

“The adjective ‘intelligent’ has been prefixed to ‘labour’ in order to show that labour to be social service must have that definite purpose behind it. Otherwise every labourer can be said to render social service. He does in a way, but what is meant here is something much more than that. A person who labours for the general good of all serves society and is worthy of his hire. Therefore, such bread labour is not different from social service.” ‡

It is clear that the principle of bread labour is never opposed to social service. “Intelligent bread labour is any day the highest form of social service.” § It adds to the useful wealth of the country.

The third characteristic of bread labour is that it is rendered for the general good. Labour is performed without desire and in a spirit of service and renunciation. Obedience to the law of bread labour brings about a silent revolution in the structure of society. The struggle for mutual service takes the place of the struggle for existence. The law of service replaces the law of the jungle. No doubt such persons who work in a spirit of dedication obtain their livelihood by their work. But their livelihood is not their primary objective but only a by-product of their vocation. “A life of sacrifice is the pinnacle of art, and is full of true joy.” * Service like virtue is its own reward.

Stigma Attached to Labour in Indian Society:— Unfortunately persons doing manual labour have been assigned an inferior status in Hindu society and they are

† *Hairjan*, 29-6-'35.

‡ *Harijan*, 1-6-'35.

§ *Ibid.*

* M. K. Gandhi, *From Yeravda Mandir*, Chaps. 14 and 15.

not regarded as their equals by the higher castes. In India today, the rich and the so-called higher classes despise bodily labour. Therefore, Gandhiji considered it very necessary to insist on the dignity of labour. "No labour is too mean for one who wants to earn an honest penny. The only thing is the readiness to use the hands and feet that God has given us." † "If the sense of shame that wrongly attaches to physical labour could be got rid of, there is enough work and to spare for young men and women of average intelligence." ‡ Gandhiji's Ahimsa would not tolerate the idea of giving a free meal to a healthy person who did not work for it in some honest way.

No Antithesis between Intellectual and Manual Labour :— There is a popular belief in this country that intellectual and manual labour are antagonistic to each other. There is no such conflict between the two if we were clear in our minds as to what constitutes the development of intelligence. "Intellectual development is often supposed to mean a knowledge of facts concerning the universe." § This is not true knowledge. Intellectual progress spells understanding and discrimination.

"It is a gross superstition to imagine that knowledge is acquired only through books. We must discard this error. Reading books has a place in life, but is useful only in its own place. If book knowledge is cultivated at the cost of body labour, we must raise a revolt against it....Even for real intellectual development, one should engage in some useful bodily activity." *

The same thought, viz., that bread labour improves the quality of the product of intelligence is apparent from the following quotation :

"Intellectual work is important and has an undoubted place in the scheme of life. But what I insist on is the necessity of physical labour. No man, I claim, ought to be free from that obligation. It will serve to improve even the quality of his intellectual output." † †

† *Harijan*, 19-12-'36.

‡ *Harijan*, 1-3-'35.

§ *Harijan*, 28-11-'48.

* *Ibid.*

† † *Harijan*, 23-2-'47.

Intellectual work and bread labour can co-exist in their own spheres. One cannot take the place of the other. This idea is succinctly expressed in the following words :

“I do not discount the value of intellectual labour, but no amount of it is any compensation for bodily labour which everyone of us is born to give for the common good of all. It may be, often is, infinitely superior to bodily labour, but it never is or can be a substitute for it, even as intellectual food far superior to the grains we eat never can be a substitute for them. Indeed without the products of the earth, those of the intellect would be an impossibility.” ‡

Intellectual labour is for the soul and is its own satisfaction and reward. In the ideal state, therefore, doctors, lawyers and the like are supposed to work solely for the benefit of society and not for self.

Work and culture cannot be separated. Culture without labour is barren. It is not possible for man to develop his mind simply by desultory reading. Even a little reading which is done to some purpose is productive of results.

Physical labour does not have evil effects on development of intelligence nor does it produce monotony. It has been pointed out earlier that bread labour improves the quality of intellectual output. Physical labour is no more monotonous than the idle hours that hang heavy on one's hands. Any work, however humdrum, is not monotonous if it is not divested of the joy of creation. It is possible that where bodily labour is performed merely to earn a few coppers, it becomes dull and listless. It will cease to be so when it is done intelligently and not out of compulsion. If one comes to know how and why things are done and his curiosity is satisfied, his work at once becomes interesting. All labour when done intelligently, enthusiastically and for the love of God or to some high purpose at once becomes re-creation and recreation.

Far-reaching Effects of Bread Labour :—The effects of bread labour are very far-reaching. Universal practice of this principle would establish equality on this earth and stamp out starvation and save the world from many a sin. Laziness, idleness, hypocrisy and crime which arise as a

‡ *Young India*, 15-10-'25.

result of misplaced charity would be a thing of the past. Misplaced charity adds nothing to the wealth of the country whether material or spiritual. It only gives a false sense of meritoriousness to the donor and makes him smug and complacent. Labour is a potent unifying agent and a great equalizer. If every one observed the obligation of bread labour, all distinctions of rank would be abolished and a conflict between the capital and labour, the poor and the rich would be stilled. "The rich would still be there, but they would deem themselves only trustees of their property, and would use it mainly in the public interest." §

Economic Equality

The Content of Economic Equality :— The goal of economic equality is equality of wages for an honest day's work, be it that of a lawyer, a doctor, a teacher or a scavenger. It requires much advanced training to reach that state of equality.* So, economic equality of Gandhiji's conception does not mean that everybody would literally have the same amount or would possess an equal amount of worldly goods. Experience tells us that differences in requirements exist in society. It is not possible to definitely assess the variation in needs of men as those of animals. All that is possible is to reduce the difference between the rich and the poor. The contrast between the two is disgraceful. There must be a general levelling down of the few rich in whose hands the bulk of the nation's wealth is concentrated and a levelling up of the dumb millions. Further, everyone must be assured a balanced diet, a decent house to live in, sufficient cloth with which to cover himself, facilities to educate his children and adequate medical relief. In short, the real implication of equal distribution is that each man must have the wherewithal to supply his essential and natural needs. So the real meaning of economic equality is 'to each according to his needs'. After the essential needs of all are satisfied, everything above and beyond the bare

§ M. K. Gandhi, *From Yeravda Mandir*, Chap. IX.

* *Harijan*, 10-8-'47.

necessaries is not tabooed. The brainiest among the workers and the peasants may manage to acquire more wealth than the rest. Gandhiji did not want to produce a dead equality where every person becomes or is rendered incapable of using his ability to the utmost possible extent, for such a society carries with it the seeds of ultimate destruction.

“Many people think that to abolish distinctions of rank means passport to anarchy and licence, whereas the meaning of abolition of distinctions should be perfect discipline — perfect because of voluntary obedience to the laws of organizations to which we may belong, i.e. the laws of our being.” †

Gandhiji wanted the rich to hold their wealth in trust for the poor or give it up for them. A state of economic equality cannot be brought about by dispossessing the wealthy of their possession through resort to violence. Attempts to abolish inequalities through violence have not succeeded anywhere — not even in Russia. Violent action does not benefit society for it stands to lose the gifts of a man who may know how to produce and add to the wealth.

Superiority of the Non-violent Method :— The non-violent way is superior to the violent method. Economic equality can be brought about through non-violence by harnessing the forces of love as against hatred. “The first step towards it is for him who has made this ideal part of his being, to bring about the necessary changes in his personal life.” ‡ It is not necessary to wait until the whole society is converted. A beginning can be made straight-away with self. Corporate effort, harnessing of the strength which non-violence gives to the people and intelligent refusal to co-operate in their slavery must bring about a condition of equality.

Trusteeship

“Indeed, at the root of this doctrine of equal distribution must lie that of the trusteeship of the wealthy for the superfluous wealth possessed by them. For according to the doctrine, they may not possess a rupee more than their neighbours....The rich will be left in possession of his wealth of which he will use what

† *Young India*, 3-5-'28.

‡ *Harijan*, 25-8-'40.

he reasonably requires for his personal needs and will act as a trustee for the remainder to be used for society. In this argument, honesty on the part of the trustee is assumed." §

What is to be done, if the rich do not become trustees of their wealth in spite of the utmost effort? Gandhiji advocates non-violent non-co-operation and civil disobedience as the right and the infallible remedy, for the rich cannot accumulate wealth without the co-operation of the poor in society.

A Fundamental Law of Nature :— It is a fundamental law of nature without exception that nature produces what is strictly needed for our wants from day to day. Therefore, if everybody took enough for himself and nothing more, no one would die of starvation in this world. Whoever appropriates more than the minimum that is necessary for him is guilty of theft. It is a breach of this observance to possess anything without needing it or to keep a superfluous thing. Perfect fulfilment of the ideal of non-possession requires that a man should like the birds, take no thought of the morrow. If he seeks first the Kingdom of God in full faith, everything will be added unto him.

Non-possession, a Mental State :— Non-possession is a mental state only. No human being can be completely dispossessed. The body, too, is a possession which will remain with us. Man will ever remain imperfect even though it will be his part to perfect himself.

Origin of Trusteeship :— Trusteeship "is a concession one has to make to those who earn money but who would not voluntarily use their earnings for the benefit of the mankind." * This doctrine is born out of common sense and a sure belief of what is practical. To those who are already wealthy or who would not shed their desire for wealth Gandhiji's advice is that they should use their wealth for service. He first enunciated this theory in reply to the Socialists who wanted to deprive zamindars and ruling chiefs of all their privileges and wealth.†

§ *Harijan*, 25-8-'40.

* *The Modern Review*, October 1935.

† *Harijan*, 3-6-'39.

Meaning of Trusteeship :— What is trusteeship ? When an individual has more than his proportion of wealth or worldly goods, he must become a trustee of the portion that is superfluous. Assuming that he has acquired wealth either by way of legacy or by trade and industry (honestly only of course), he must realize that all that wealth does not belong to him ; what belongs to him is “ the right to an honourable livelihood, no better than that enjoyed by millions of others ”.‡ The rest of his wealth belongs to the community and must be used for the welfare of the community. §

The rich can protect their wealth either with arms or with the weapon of non-violence.

“ For those who wish to follow the latter way, the best and most effective mantram is : ‘ तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः ’ (Enjoy thy wealth by renouncing it). Expanded, it means : Earn your crores by all means. But understand that your wealth is not yours ; it belongs to the people. Take what you require for your legitimate needs, and use the remainder for society.” *

Commercial Prosperity and Strict Honesty Not Incompatible :— It may be asked whether it is possible to earn crores by pure means. Gandhiji did not believe that commercial prosperity was incompatible with strict honesty. He knew businessmen who were absolutely honest and scrupulous in their dealings. The reference to “ the earning of crores ” is to lawful possession which is not either tainted or is not an insolent demonstration of inequalities surrounding us.† He cited the example of a man owing a mining lease who suddenly finds himself a millionaire as a result of discovering a diamond of rare value, on his land. Such a person cannot be held guilty of having used impure means. The explanation of this reference in his own words is as follows :

‡ *Harijan*, 3-6-'39.

§ *Ibid*.

* *Harijan*, 1-2-'42.

† *Harijan*, 22-2-'42 : The last paragraph of this article explains that the reference to earning of crores is only to the honestly begotten wealth, assuming that a man may legitimately possess riches. — Ed.

“My argument was surely addressed to such men. I have no hesitaton in endorsing the proposition that generally rich men and for that matter most men are not particular as to the way they make money. In the application of the method of non-violence, one must believe in the possibility of every person, however depraved, being reformed under humane and skilled treatment. We must appeal to the good in human beings and expect response.” ‡

Who can Judge ? :— Who is to judge what gains or riches are lawful or tainted, ill-gotten or well-gotten ? “God alone can judge or a competent authority appointed both by the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’ can judge. Not anyone and everyone.” § If we say that all property and possession is theft, we must give up all our property and wealth. We must ask ourselves whether we are prepared to do so. If not, judge not others. Cultivate in yourself the spirit of detachment, and live in the world untouched and unaffected by it.

Voluntary Parting v. Forcible Seizure :— Could one define how much of the existing wealth belongs to the rich who may be induced to become trustees and how much does not belong to them ? If a rich man is prepared to keep for himself 25% and to give even 75% to charities we should close with the offer, for, we must know that “75% voluntarily given is better than 100% surrendered at the point of the bayonet”.*

It may be argued that a man who surrenders by compulsion today may willy nilly accept the new position tomorrow. That is, however, a remote possibility which cannot be considered seriously. What is certain is that if violence is used today, it will meet with greater counter-violence. “With non-violence as the rule, life will no doubt be a series of compromises. But it is better than an endless series of clashes.” †

Commission of Trustees :— In a non-violent State, the commission of trustees will also be regulated. The

‡ *Harijan*, 22-2-'42.

§ *Harijan*, 1-8-'36.

* *Harijan*, 1-6-'35.

† *Ibid.*

commission that a trustee will be entitled to from his income will not be a fixed percentage. The reason why it should vary will be seen from the following extract :

“ I will not dictate to them what commission to take, but ask them to take what is fair, e.g., I would ask a man who possesses Rs. 100/- to take Rs. 50/- and give the other Rs. 50/- to the workers. But to him who possesses Rs. 1,00,00,000/- I would perhaps say take 1 per cent for yourself. So you see that my commission would not be a fixed figure because that would result in atrocious injustice.” ‡

Legal Ownership :— Legal ownership in the transformed conditions would vest in the trustee and not in the State. Therefore, choice should be given to the original owner who becomes the first trustee to nominate his successor. Since a trustee has no heir but the public § the right of the trustee to nominate his successors must be subject to legal sanction, i.e., the choice must be finalized by the State. “ Such arrangement puts a check on the State as well as the individual.” *

Trusteeship Formula :— A simple, practical trusteeship formula was drawn up by Shri Kishorlal Mashruwala and Shri Narhari Parikh sometime after the release of Gandhiji from Aga Khan Palace Detention Camp in 1944. The draft as corrected by Gandhiji reads as follows :

(1) “ Trusteeship provides a means of transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one. It gives no quarter to capitalism, but gives the present owning class a chance of reforming itself. It is based on the faith that human nature is never beyond redemption.

(2) It does not recognize any right of private ownership of property except inasmuch as it may be permitted by society for its own welfare ;

(3) It does not exclude legislative regulation of the ownership and use of wealth ;

(4) Thus under State-regulated trusteeship, an individual will not be free to hold or use his wealth for selfish satisfaction or in disregard of the interest of society ;

(5) Just as it is proposed to fix a decent minimum living wage, even so a limit should be fixed for the maximum income

‡ *Young India*, 26-11-'31.

§ *Harijan*, 12-4-'42.

* *Harijan*, 16-2-'47.

that would be allowed to any person in society. The difference between such minimum and maximum incomes should be reasonable and equitable and variable from time to time so much so that the tendency would be towards obliteration of the difference.

(6) Under the Gandhian economic order, the character of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal whim or greed."†

The formula is realistic and also flexible. It puts the present owning class on its trial and gives it an opportunity to use its intelligence and skill for the benefit of society. The mode of regulation of the ownership of wealth will be considered later when discussing the pattern for organization of industries.

The question, how many can be real trustees is beside the point. It may be that the theory is difficult to practise. However, if the theory is true, it is immaterial whether many can live up to it or one lives up to it. He who believes in Ahimsa must try to live up to it no matter whether he succeeds or fails.

The idea of trusteeship is a sure method to evolve a new order of life in place of the present one where each one lives for himself regardless of his neighbour. If the society is to make real progress along peaceful lines the rich must recognize that their wealth gives them no superiority over the poor who are also children of God.

If the Rich Do Not Become Trustees :— If they do not become trustees voluntarily, force of circumstances will compel them to do so unless they have no desire of averting the disaster. In the non-violent State, public opinion can do what violence can never do. In reality, the toilers are the owners of what they produce. If they realize their power which comes as a result of an intelligent combination, the oppression of the exploiting class will cease. If the people non-co-operate with the evils of the oppressive system, it must die of inanition. This is the only way in which the class struggle can be averted.

Industrialism

So far we have traced an outline of the non-violent

† *Harijan*, 25-10-'52.

State of Gandhiji's conception. This Swaraj cannot be created in vacuum. We are living today in an age of industrialization which is based on the use of machinery. We must now examine how Gandhiji reacts to industrialism.

Progressive Evolution of Views :— On no other subject have Gandhiji's views undergone such a progressive change as on the subject of industrialism and machinery. We must travel back in time to the starting point of his acquaintance with machines and closely follow the process of gradual evolution.

Symbol of Modern Civilization :— The germs of all that Gandhiji taught lie in a little book published by him in 1909 in Gujarati which was later translated into English under the title *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*. It contained a severe condemnation of what was termed 'modern civilization' of which, he believed, the chief symbol was machinery.

The Background of Gandhiji's Economic Thought :— It is necessary to keep in mind while we study Gandhiji's economic thought that he was actively concerned with the making of a new India. Therefore, his observations are based on a study of and relate to Indian conditions. This will appear clearly when we consider later the alternative suggested by Gandhiji to industrialism and his message of the spinning wheel. His diagnosis of the Indian conditions is sure. He hesitates to advise the West but when he does so through courtesy, he is aware that he is treading on unfamiliar ground.

Causes of the Ruin of the Village Economy :— In the chapter devoted to machinery in *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhiji alludes to Romesh Chandra Dutt's *Economic History of India* with emotion. His study of the book revealed to him that the mill industry of Manchester ruined the village economy of India based on handicrafts, and impoverished its people. Therefore, he equated machinery with modern civilization. Modern civilization was bad not because it was modern but because it was responsible for the impoverishment and degradation of human beings. He examined the influence of railways and machine-made goods upon

Indian life and reached the conclusion that they were evil. The term 'machinery' in *Hind Swaraj* represents something more than machinery itself. Machinery symbolized modern civilization and included in it the industrial system which went along with the power-driven mills. The distinction between the industrial system and machinery had not become clear to him. Evidently his experience of machines at that time was very limited. At this stage, he did not know the distinction between the loom and the spinning wheel and in *Hind Swaraj*, he used the word 'loom' to mean the 'wheel'.‡ He had not even seen a handloom or a spinning wheel when he described it in *Hind Swaraj*. It was only after he returned to India in 1915 and commenced his experiments in Sabarmati Ashram that the idea of Khadi took concrete shape.

Organization of National Life :— During the early phase of the non-co-operation movement, the economic problems engaged his serious attention. He opposed the economic system which was responsible for the introduction and extension of machinery. In his articles on Khadi relating to that period, he pleaded for organization of national life through the best methods of production and distribution. Multiplication of mills was bad because it could only cause concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. Until 1921, he had not departed from his original position of 1908.

Change of Views in Early Twenties :— The period of early twenties revealed a progressive change in the views of Gandhiji on machinery. He had moved from the original stand that machinery was symbolic of the evil of modern civilization. He now narrowed down his charge to industrialism, i.e. centralized mass of production with profit as the motive. With his insight into human problems he learnt to appreciate the distinction between machinery and industrialism and between machinery of one kind and another. He came to recognize that the human body as well as Charkha were exquisite pieces of machinery. Machinery in itself was not bad. It could be used lawfully

‡ *Young India*, 20-9-'28.

or unlawfully, for human good as well as for human exploitation. So while conceding that machinery had a place in society, it had to minister to the needs of man and not to be the master of man. Some machinery could be used for human welfare, to relieve his drudgery and to lighten his burden. This became increasingly clear to Gandhiji in the years 1925-'27. While in 1908 machine had been for him a symbol of industrialism, it was no longer so. Machine if controlled could also be an influence for the good. Indiscriminate multiplication of machinery might displace human labour and spread pauperism but simple tools and instruments and such machines as would save individual labour and lighten the burden of artisans were to be welcomed. His economic programme of Khadi was intended to restore machinery to its proper state in the scheme of life. This change in his approach to machinery was bound to affect his ideas regarding large-scale machinery.

Organization of machinery for the purpose of concentrating wealth and power in the hands of a few which helped them to ride on the backs of millions was morally and socially wrong. The impetus behind this craze for machinery was not philanthropy but greed. The mill industry could not be allowed to prosper at the expense of the country. He resented the wanton and wicked destruction of the one cottage industry of India that brought a morsel or two of food to the mouths of the millions. He observed, "The individual is the one supreme consideration. The saving of labour of the individual should be the object, and honest humanitarian considerations and not greed the motive." §

The Period from 1926 to 1931 :— His condemnation of industrialism gained in emphasis from 1926 to 1931. He declared in one of the articles that machine as such was not to be feared but the industrial system in which man was made subservient to machines. It was not man whose needs dictated what should be produced but machines which dictated how much goods should be

§ *Young India*, 13-11-'24.

produced, so that they might be run with profit to the owner. Industrialism depended entirely on the capacity of the country to exploit, on foreign markets being open and on the absence of competition. The industrial system encouraged selfishness and want of consideration for one's neighbours.

Opposition to Machinery Qualified :— The writings of 1924 also marked another point of departure in his attitude to machinery. In certain cases, where the use of heavy machinery was unavoidable, he was prepared to use it under social control and under ideal and attractive working conditions. We will consider this fully when we discuss the alternative suggested by Gandhiji to industrialism.

Popular Misconception :— There is a popular misconception that Gandhiji was against the use of electricity and was opposed to scientific discoveries and inventions. This is not so. He was prepared to give them a place in his scheme of things if the evils of industrialism could be avoided and they were worked for the benefit of all. When asked if he would have nothing to do with electricity, he replied :

“Who said so? If we could have electricity in every village home, I should not mind villagers plying their implements and tools with the help of electricity. But then the village communities or the State would own power-houses, just as they have their grazing pastures. But where there is not electricity and no machinery, what are idle hands to do? Will you give them work or would you have their owners cut them down for want of work?” *

On another occasion, he observed :

“Now that we know the use of steam and electricity, we should be able to use them on due occasion and after we have learnt to avoid industrialism. Our concern is...to destroy industrialism, at any cost.” †

His Attitude to Inventions of Science :— His attitude to inventions, scientific truths and discoveries reflect a genuine concern for human welfare and a horror of the

* *Harijan*, 22-6-'35.

† *Young India*, 7-10-'26.

perversion of these means. "I would prize every invention of science made for the benefit of all", said Gandhiji. "There is a difference between invention and invention. I should not care for the asphyxiating gases capable of killing masses of men at a time." ‡

"I would add that scientific truths and discoveries should first of all cease to be the mere instruments of greed. Then labourers will not be overworked and machinery instead of becoming a hindrance will be a help." §

Alternative to Industrialism:—What is the alternative to industrialism? European writers on the subject say that there is no escape from industrialization on the Western lines. All nations must, willy nilly, go that way. They are apt to generalize from European examples which cannot be on all fours with Indian conditions. They "hastily argue from Western conditions that what may be true of them must be true of India where conditions are different in so many material respects." * It must, however, be remembered that the laws of economics vary in their application to different conditions. Their advice cannot, therefore, guide us beyond a certain point. What is true of Europe is not necessarily true of India.

"We know, too, that each nation has its own characteristics and individuality. India has her own; and if we are to find out a true solution for her many ills, we shall have to take all the idiosyncrasies of her constitution into account, and then prescribe a remedy." †

Therefore, to claim to industrialize India in the same sense as Europe is to attempt the impossible.

Differences in Conditions of the West and India:—"Why must India become industrialized in the Western sense? The Western civilization is urban. Small countries like England or Italy may afford to urbanize their systems. A big country like America with a very sparse population, perhaps, cannot do otherwise. But one would think that a big country, with a teeming population, with an ancient rural tradition which has hitherto answered its purpose, need not, must not copy the Western model. What is good for one nation situated in one condition is not necessarily good

‡ *Harijan*, 22-6-'35.

§ *Harijan*, 13-11-'24.

* *Young India*, 2-7-'31.

† *Young India*, 6-8-'25.

enough for another, differently situated. One man's food is another man's poison. Physical geography of a country has a predominant share in determining its culture. A fur coat may be a necessity for the dweller in the Polar regions, it will smother those living in the Equatorial regions." ‡

"India has got to develop her own economics, her own policy, her own method of dealing with her industries and every thing else." §

The Common Malaise of the West and India:— Knowing the differences in the conditions between Europe and India Gandhiji acknowledges that he is not competent to advise the West on its problems. But as he is requested to give his opinion, he is emboldened to analyse the European situation and to suggest a solution. "I know neither the diagnosis of the European disease nor the remedy in the same sense that I claim to know both in the case of India," said Gandhiji and added, "I, however, feel that fundamentally the disease is the same in Europe as it is in India, in spite of the fact that in the former country, the people enjoy political self-government." *

The disease referred to in the above lines is the exploitation of the masses by the ruling class or caste under the sacred name of democracy. If the disease is to be cured it will not do to have vague generalization that masses will be delivered from exploitation and degradation. We must go deeper for an answer. "Is not the answer this that they † want to occupy the status that capital does today? If so, it can be attained only by violence." ‡ ‡

Drawbacks of a Violent Revolution:— Russia is an example of an attempt of the proletariat to achieve the status of capital through violence. What is the result? This is how Gandhiji looks at it:

"As I look at Russia where the apotheosis of industrialization has been reached, the life there does not appeal to me. To use

‡ *Young India*, 25-7-'29.

§ *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, G. A. Natesan & Co., (4th Edition), p. 844.

* *Young India*, 3-9-'25.

† i.e. the masses.

‡ ‡ *Young India*, 3-9-'25.

the language of the Bible, 'What shall it avail a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his soul?' In modern terms it is beneath human dignity to lose one's individuality and become a mere cog in the machine. I want every individual to become a full-blooded, fully developed member of society. The villages must become self-sufficient. I see no other solution if one has to work in terms of Ahimsa." §

How to Shun the Evils of Capital:—If the masses want to shun the evils of capital

"then they would strive to attain a juster distribution of the products of labour. This immediately takes us to contentment and simplicity, voluntarily adopted. Under the new outlook multiplicity of material wants will not be the aim of life; the aim will be rather their restriction consistently with comfort. We shall cease to think of getting what we can but we shall decline to receive what all cannot get. It occurs to me that it ought not to be difficult to make a successful appeal to the masses of Europe in terms of economics and a fairly successful working of such an experiment must lead to immense and unconscious spiritual results....The spiritual law expresses itself only through the ordinary activities of life. It thus affects the economic, the social and the political fields." *

If the masses of Europe can be persuaded to adopt the view suggested by Gandhiji above, violence would be wholly unnecessary to attain the aim and they could easily come to their own by following out the obvious corollaries of non-violence.

Meaning of Abundance:—By 'abundance' Gandhiji means 'everyone having plenty to eat and drink and to clothe himself with, enough to keep his mind trained and educated'.† He did not want an individual to possess more than he could ever usefully use. Neither did he want poverty, penury, misery, dirt and dust.‡

Reorganization of Village Life:—The alternative to industrialism does not necessarily mean "a return to the old absolute simplicity". "But it will have to be a reorganization in which village life will predominate, and in which

§ *Harijan*, 28-1-'39.

* *Young India*, 3-9-'25.

† *Harijan*, 12-2-'38.

‡ *Ibid*.

brute and material force will be subordinated to the spiritual force.” §

Change of Flow in the Reverse Direction :—In reply to a question whether he would industrialize India, Gandhiji replied :

“ I would, indeed, in my sense of the term. The village communities should be revived. Indian villages produced and supplied to the Indian towns and cities all their wants. India became impoverished when our cities became foreign markets and began to drain the villages dry by dumping cheap and shoddy goods from foreign lands.” *

He would, therefore, go back to the natural economy changing the flow from the villages to the cities in the reverse direction. He would industrialize the villages but not in the normally accepted sense of industrialization, viz., multiplication of mills.

The Natural Economy :—The natural economy would consist of a harmonious integration of large-scale production with village handicrafts. They can be harmonized if they are planned so as to help the villages. Key industries which the nation needs, may be centralized but anything that can be taken up by the villages with a little organizing would not be chosen as a key industry. Gandhiji was against large-scale production of things which villages could produce with little difficulty.†

State Ownership of Heavy Industries :—Without enumerating key industries, it could be stated broadly that he would have State ownership where a large number of people had to work together. Manufacture of Singer-Sewing Machines, ‡ printing presses and surgical instruments ‡ ‡ were given as instances by him for which heavy machinery would be needed. The ownership of the products of their labour, whether skilled or unskilled, would vest in them through the State.* *

§ *Young India*, 6-8-'25.

* *Harijan*, 27-2-'37.

† *Harijan*, 28-1-'39.

‡ *Young India*, 13-11-'24.

§ § *Harijan*, 22-6-'35.

* * *Harijan*, 1-9-'46.

Heavy industries would necessarily be centralized and nationalized. But they would occupy the least part of the vast national activity in the villages.† Like the Socialists he believed in the nationalization or State control of large-scale factories. But he desired that the workers in such factories should work under the most attractive and ideal conditions, not for the profit, but for the benefit of humanity, love taking the place of greed as the motive.‡ Even if the key industries were not taken over by the State itself, it would at least have a predominant voice in the conduct, administration and development of key industries.§ The State of his conception being based on non-violence, he would not dispossess moneyed men by force but would invite their co-operation in the process of conversion to State ownership. For him there were no *pariahs* of society, whether they were millionaires or paupers.*

Harmony between the Two Sectors of Industry :— The harmony between the two sectors of industry could not be achieved by centralization of power in the hands of the State, but by an extension of a sense of trusteeship. In his opinion, the violence of private ownership was less injurious than the violence of the State. However, if it was unavoidable he would support a minimum of State ownership.† †

Private Possession v. State Control :— Though private possession is, strictly speaking, incompatible with non-violence, he was prepared to put up with it and compromise in the hope that some good could be evoked out of it. State ownership is no doubt better than private ownership but it is objectionable on the ground of violence. The State represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul but as the State is a soulless

† M. K. Gandhi, *Constructive Programme*, 1941 Edition; p. 8.

‡ *Young India*, 13-11-'24.

§ *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, G. A. Natesan & Co., (4th Edition), p. 844.

* *Harijan*, 1-9-'46.

† † *The Modern Review*, October 1935.

machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence. Hence he preferred the doctrine of trusteeship.‡ He was doubtful about the new experiment in Soviet Russia of State-controlled industry, i.e., an economic order in which, both production and distribution are controlled and regulated by the State. Since the system was based on force he did not know how far and where it would take them.§ The State, however, need not always be based on violence. “It might be so in theory but the practice of the theory demands a State which would for the most part be based on non-violence.” *

Industrialization Synonymous with Mass Production:—Industrialization is synonymous with mass production. “Mass production is a technical term for production by the fewest possible number through the aid of highly complicated machinery.”† “Industrialization on a mass scale will necessarily lead to passive or active exploitation of the villagers, as the problems of competition and marketing come in.” ‡ ‡

Evils of Industrialism:—The evils of industrialism may be briefly summarized as under: (i) concentration of capital and power in the hands of a few; (ii) growth of parasitism — wealthy and middle classes upon the working classes, the cities upon the villages and industrial nations upon the agricultural nations; (iii) clash of capital and labour; (iv) the widening of the gap between the haves and the have-nots resulting in glaring inequalities; and (v) aggressive expansion of commercialism with an insatiable material ambition at one end and consequent war at the other.

The Lesson of the West:—The West teaches us to avoid all these evils of industrialism or capitalism. Mass scale industrialization develops privileges and monopolies.

‡ *The Modern Review*, October 1935.

§ *Harijan*, 2-11-'34.

* *Harijan*, 16-2-'47.

† *Harijan*, 2-11-'34.

‡‡ *Harijan*, 29-8-'36.

This was distasteful to Gandhiji. Whatever could not be shared with the masses was taboo to him.

“Therefore, we have to concentrate on the village being self-contained, manufacturing mainly for use. Provided this character of the village industry is maintained, there would be no objection to villages using even modern machines and tools that they can afford to use. Only they should not be used as a means of exploitation of others.” §

“Granting for the moment that the machinery may supply all the needs of humanity, still it would concentrate production in particular areas, so that you would have to go in a roundabout way to regulate distribution; whereas, if there is production and distribution both in the respective areas where things are required, it is automatically regulated and there is less chance for fraud, none for speculation.” *

There is no other solution except the villages becoming self-sufficient if one has to work in terms of Ahimsa.† “These villages cannot retain the freedom they have enjoyed from time immemorial, if they do not control the production of prime necessities of life.” ‡ “Without simultaneous distribution on an equally mass scale, the production can result only in a world tragedy.” §

Distribution to be Simultaneous with Production:— Distribution can be equalized when production is localized; in other words, when the distribution is simultaneous with production. Distribution will never be equal so long as one wants to tap other markets of the world to dispose of his goods. That does not mean the world has no use for the marvellous advance in science and organization that the Western nations have made, but they should be used from philanthropic motives.* *

“When production and consumption both become localized, the temptation to speed up production indefinitely and at any price, disappears. All the endless difficulties and problems that our present-day economic system presents, too, would then come to an end.” † †

§ *Harijan*, 29-8-'36.

* *Harijan*, 2-11-'34.

† *Harijan*, 28-1-'39.

‡ *Young India*, 2-7-'31.

§ *Harijan*, 2-11-'34.

* * *Ibid.* † † *Ibid.*

“When the actual needs of the population are satisfied, the production would necessarily stop. It won't be continued for the sake of bringing in more gold irrespective of the needs of a people and at the risk of their impoverishment. There would be no unnatural accumulation of hoards in the pockets of the few, and want in the midst of plenty in regard to the rest, as is happening today, for instance, in America.” ‡

The formula therefore is :

“Every village to produce and use all its necessities and in addition, produce a certain percentage as its contribution to the requirements of the cities.” §

The Proper Function of Cities :— The villages will be protected against the inroads of the cities. “At one time cities were dependent on the villages. Now, it is the reverse. There is no interdependence.” * Under Gandhiji's scheme “nothing will be allowed to be produced by cities which can be equally well produced by villages. The proper function of cities is to serve as clearing houses for village products.” †

Every village will no doubt be a self-supporting and self-contained unit as far as possible. Such villages will be knit together through exchange of commodities which are not locally produced.‡ ‡

Conflict between More Employment and High Standard of Living :— It may be asked whether a network of such villages even though they offer employment to the large bulk of the population will promote higher and adequate living standards. There is a conflict between the removal of unemployment rapidly and raising the standard of living. We would like to have both. It would no doubt be possible to give employment to everyone in India, if all the factories were broken up. It would be possible to achieve thus a state of full employment but at a low level of life. We want both the high standard as well

‡ *Harijan*, 2-11-'34.

§ M. K. Gandhi, *Constructive Programme* (1941 Edition), p. 8.

* *Harijan*, 28-1-'39.

† *Ibid*.

‡ ‡ *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, G. A. Natesan & Co., (4th Edition), p. 336.

as full employment. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru alluded to the conflict in a speech made at Allahabad sometime in March 1955 thus :

“There is a slight conflict at the present moment in our country, and in other countries, that are situated like us, between raising the level of living of people and more employment. And you must remember that there is all the time a conflict between living standards and more employment. If you lay greater stress on employment, the result is possibly lowering the level of living. If you lay greater stress on raising the level of living, you may have more unemployment. You have to balance the two. You cannot do too much of either. You cannot raise the level of many at the cost of greater unemployment, because that will be socially bad. On the other hand, if you put an end to unemployment in such a way that you never raise the level, then you have missed the bus, you are not getting anywhere at all. You remain poor. So the problem becomes one of very delicate balancing, and the basis of it is more wealth production. If you do not produce more wealth, all your schemes of distribution fail, because there is nothing much to distribute. So, how to combine more production and more employment is the problem.”

Undue emphasis on either of the two elements leads to a lopsided development and also leads humanity away from the goal of equality. It does nothing to avoid the evils of industrialism or capitalism which were enumerated above. That Gandhiji was aware of this conflict is clear from the following quotation :

“Any plan which exploited the raw materials of a country and neglected the potentially more powerful manpower was lopsided and could never tend to establish human equality.” §

So Gandhiji advocates planning on the basis of village as the pivot of the economy.

“Real planning consisted in the best utilization of the whole of manpower of India and the distribution of the raw products of India in her numerous villages instead of sending them outside and then rebuying finished articles at fabulous prices.” *

Swadeshi

The Beginning of the Principle of Swadeshi :— India or any other country cannot live for others before she lives for herself and produces everything for her requirements

§ *Harijan*, 23-3-'47.

* *Ibid.*

within her own borders. Then she need not be drawn into the vortex of mad and ruinous competition which breeds jealousy, fratricide and many other evils. Underneath the village economy lies a great principle which Gandhiji named as Swadeshi.

Three Branches of Swadeshi:—“Swadeshi is that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote.” † There are three branches of Swadeshi—religious, political and economic. We are concerned here with the application of Swadeshi to economics. In the domain of economics, Swadeshi means that one should use only things that are produced by his immediate neighbours and serve those industries by making them efficient and complete where they may be found wanting. ‡

What is Swadeshi:—“Swadeshi is the spirit which dictates man to serve his next-door neighbour to the exclusion of any other. The neighbour thus served had in his turn to serve his own neighbour. In this sense Swadeshi is never exclusive. It recognizes the scientific limitations of human capacity for service.” §

Man's First Duty:—“A man's first duty is to his neighbour. This does not imply hatred for the foreigner or partiality for the fellow-countryman. Our capacity for service has obvious limits. We can serve even our neighbour with some difficulty. If everyone of us duly performed his duty to his neighbour, no one in the world who needed assistance would be left unattended to. Therefore one who serves his neighbour serves all the world. As a matter of fact, there is in Swadeshi, no room for distinction between one's own and other people. To serve one's neighbour is to serve the world.” *

“I must not serve my distant neighbour at the expense of the nearest. It is never vindictive or punitive. It is in no sense narrow, for I buy from every part of the world what is needed for my growth. I refuse to buy from anybody anything, however nice or beautiful, if it interferes with my growth or injures those whom Nature has made my first care. I buy useful healthy literature from every part of the world. I buy surgical instruments

† *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, G. A. Natesan & Co., (4th Edition), p. 336.

‡ *Ibid.*

§ *Harijan*, 23-3-'47.

* *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, G. A. Natesan & Co., (4th Edition), p. 377 at p. 385.

from England, pins and pencils from Austria and watches from Switzerland. But I will not buy an inch of the finest cotton fabric from England or Japan or any other part of the world, because it has injured and increasingly injures the millions of the inhabitants of India." †

Swadeshi, No Narrow Creed :— Is service of one's motherland a narrow and exclusive creed of patriotism ? Gandhiji's answer is 'no' as is evident from the following extract :

"In seeming to serve India to the exclusion of every other country, I do not harm any other country. My patriotism is both exclusive and inclusive. It is exclusive in the sense that in all humility I confine my attention to the land of my birth but it is inclusive in the sense that my service is not of a competitive or antagonistic nature. *Sic utere tuo ut alienum non laedas* (so use your own property as not to injure your neighbour's) is not merely a legal maxim, but it is a grand doctrine of life. It is the key to a proper practice of Ahimsa or love." ‡

Gandhiji's nationalism was not so narrow that he would not feel for the distress of other people. He did not want India's happiness at the sacrifice of any other country's happiness nor did he want her to rise on the ruin of other nations. He wanted India's rise so that the whole world might benefit. If India was strong and able, she "would send out to the world her treasures of art and health-giving spices, but would refuse to send out opium or intoxicating liquors although the traffic may bring much material benefit to India." §

"A votary of Swadeshi will carefully study his environment, and try to help his neighbours wherever possible, by giving preference to local manufactures, even if they are of an inferior grade or dearer in price than things, manufactured elsewhere. He will try to remedy their defects, but will not, because of their defects, give them up in favour of foreign manufactures." *

Even if we confine Swadeshi to a given set of articles, allowing ourselves as a temporary measure to use such

† *Young India*, 12-3-'25.

‡ *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, G. A. Natesan & Co., (4th Edition), p. 336.

§ *Young India*, 12-3-'25.

* M. K. Gandhi, *From Yeravda Mandir*, Chap. XVI.

things as might not be procurable in the country, we would be making for the goal.†

A Doctrine of Selfless Service :—“Even Swadeshi like any other good thing can be ridden to death if it is made a fetish. That is a danger which must be guarded against. To reject foreign manufactures merely because they are foreign and to go on wasting national time and money in the promotion in one’s country of manufactures for which it is not suited, would be criminal folly and a negation of the Swadeshi spirit. A true votary of Swadeshi will not harbour ill-will towards a foreigner and not be actuated by antagonism towards anybody on the earth. Swadeshi is not a cult of hatred. It is a doctrine of selfless service that has its roots in the purest Ahimsa, i.e., love.” ‡

Gandhiji had never been an advocate of prohibition of all things foreign because they are foreign. His economic creed was a complete taboo in respect of all foreign commodities whose importation was likely to prove harmful to the indigenous interest. This meant that in no circumstance would he import a commodity that could be adequately supplied from his own country. For instance, he would regard it as a sin to import Australian wheat even though it was of a better quality, but he had no objection to the import of oatmeal from Scotland if an absolute necessity was made out. He would not countenance the boycott of a single foreign article out of ill-will or a feeling of hatred. §

Swadeshi Article :—He defined a Swadeshi article as any article which “subverses the interest of the millions even though the capital and talent are foreign but under effective Indian control.” ††

Meaning of Effective Indian Control :—What was meant by effective Indian control? Formerly any industry conducted in India was considered an Indian industry, even though the capital, management and control were foreign and it worked against the interests of the masses. This process of dumping foreign industries with the mere

† *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, G. A. Natesan & Co., (4th Edition), p. 336.

‡ M. K. Gandhi, *From Yeravda Mandir*, Chap. XVI.

§ *Young India*, 15-11-'28.

†† *Harijan*, 25-2-'39.

label of India Ltd. resulted in undermining and throttling the infant indigenous enterprises. Therefore Gandhiji had to make his attitude clear towards such organizations. He observed :

“An industry to be Indian must be demonstrably in the interest of the masses. It must be manned by Indians both skilled and unskilled. Its capital and machinery should be Indian and the labour employed should have a living wage and be comfortably housed, while the welfare of the children of the labourers should be guaranteed by the employers. This is an ideal definition.” ‡

Only the A.I.S.A. § and the A.I.V.I.A. § could barely satisfy the definition according to him. Nevertheless complete conformation to the definition ought to be the goal of every true Swadeshi enterprise.

A True Swadeshi Company :—Elaborating this idea of a Swadeshi company further he observed :

“I would say that only those concerns can be regarded as Swadeshi whose control, direction and management either by a managing director or by managing agents are in Indian hands. I should have no objection to the use of foreign capital, or to the employment of foreign talent when such are not available in India, or when we need them—but only on condition that such capital and such talent are exclusively under the control, direction and management of Indians and are used in the interests of India....The use of foreign capital or talent is one thing, and the dumping of foreign industrial concerns is totally another thing.” *

The concerns with the label of merely India Ltd., could not in the remotest sense of the term be called Swadeshi. Rather than countenance these ventures, he preferred the development of such industries to be delayed by a few years in order to permit national capital and enterprise to grow up and build such industries in future under the actual and effective control, direction and management of Indians themselves.

A Protagonist of Protection :—Gandhiji hated legislative interference in any department of life but he was an ardent supporter of protectionism. He pleaded strongly for

‡ *Harijan*, 23-10-'37.

§ All-India Spinners' Association and All-India Village Industries Association.

* *Harijan*, 26-3-'38.

stiff protective duties upon foreign goods in order to nurture national industries.†

The reason why he was a confirmed protectionist was that the policy of the Government was formulated in the interest of the Lancashire manufacturers without regard to the misery of the Indian peasantry. So he said :

“Free trade may be good for England which dumps down her manufactures among helpless people and wishes her wants to be supplied from the outside at the cheapest rate. But free trade has ruined India’s peasantry in that it has all but destroyed her cottage industry. Moreover, no new trade can compete with foreign trade without protection.” ‡

Again, “it can be said without fear of contradiction and without any exaggeration that, she § has risen upon the ruin of India’s commerce and industries. The cottage industry of India had to perish in order that Lancashire might flourish.” *

“The economics of England are different from those of Germany. Germany enriched herself by bounty-fed beet sugar. England enriched herself by exploiting foreign markets. What was possible for a compact area was not possible for an area 1900 miles long and 1500 broad. The economics of a nation are determined by its climatic, geological and temperamental conditions. The Indian conditions are different from the English in all these essentials. What is meat for England is in many cases poison for India....Free trade for a country which has become industrial, whose population can and does live in cities, whose people do not mind preying upon other nations and, therefore, sustain the biggest navy to protect their unnatural commerce, may be economically sound.” †† (Though Gandhiji questioned its morality).

Free trade for India had proved her curse and held her in bondage.

Protection, Not Discrimination :—To label then the protection afforded to Indian industries as discrimination between Indian interest and European interest was improper. To deny protection to Indian industry was to

† *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, G. A. Natesan & Co., (4th Edition), p. 336.

‡ *Young India*, 15-5-'24.

§ i.e. England.

* *Young India*, 26-3-'31.

†† *Young India*, 8-12-'21.

perpetuate Indian helotage. "What is equality of rights between a giant and a dwarf? Before one can think of equality between unequals, the dwarf must be raised to the height of the giant." ‡ This process of equalizing was necessary and inevitable in the interests of the millions of India.

It is a misnomer to call this process one of racial discrimination. The charge of racial discrimination cannot be sustained for even Indians who occupy entrenched position behind their foreign patrons are also expected to conform to the interests of the masses. At the Round Table Conference in 1931, the British merchants in India claimed financial safeguards in the future Indian Constitution and demanded that there should be no racial discrimination. Gandhiji readily conceded the latter demand and proposed that no disqualification not suffered by Indian-born citizens of the State should be imposed upon any persons lawfully residing in or entering India merely on the ground of race, colour or religion. This formula would ensure that there would be no discrimination against a Britisher or any foreigner, European, American or Japanese. §

Because of India's long connection extending over a century, Gandhiji was willing to place British trade on a favoured basis in an independent India, if it was not hurtful to India's interests.* He was prepared to give preference to Lancashire cloth over all foreign cloth which India needed and which Lancashire alone could produce.† He visualized an independent India free from exploitation from within or without of which Britain could become the chief supplier, if she was a partner or ally of India.‡‡

No Protection to Inefficiency :—A prohibitive duty was not to be permitted to protect inefficiency. Gandhiji

‡ *Young India*, 26-3-'31.

§ *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, G. A. Natesan & Co., (4th Edition), p. 844.

* *Young India*, 26-3-'31.

† *Young India*, 15-10-'31.

‡‡ *Young India*, 26-3-'31.

observed that when we arrive at the state of Swaraj, efficiency will be necessary perhaps more than now. §

Boycott v. Swadeshi:—Boycott is not the same as Swadeshi. “Swadeshi is an eternal principle whose neglect has brought untold grief to mankind. It means production and distribution of articles manufactured in one’s own country.” * It is a constructive programme. Boycott on the other hand is a temporary makeshift resorted to compel the hands of the opponent by deliberately making an attempt to inflict a monetary loss upon him. “Boycott, therefore, operates as an undue influence brought in to secure one’s purpose. It may indirectly result, but not unless it is persistent and prolonged, in greater manufacture at home.” † Boycott does not mean exclusion of all foreign goods but exclusion of merely the opponent’s goods.

“Boycott to be effective has to be fairly universal whereas the observance of Swadeshi by a single person is so much to the national good. One can make boycott successful only by an appeal to angry passions. It may, therefore, result in unintended consequences and may even lead to a permanent estrangement between the parties.” ‡

Boycott after the event is of no consequence. To influence the result it must be instantaneous. Its area is too large for any organization that can be brought into being at a moment’s notice. And there is always the difficulty of the opponent introducing his wares into the country through some other foreign country.

So weighing the two in balance, Gandhiji observed :

“I swear by Swadeshi because it is an evolutionary process gaining strength as it goes forward. Any organization can serve it. It is independent of the justice or the injustice of the rulers.... It is its own reward. Therefore there is no waste of energy, no failure. Even a little practice of this Dharma saves one from a great danger. Swadeshi and boycott are, therefore, not the same but are at the opposite poles.” §§

§ *Young India*, 16-7-'31.

* *Young India*, 14-1-'20.

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Ibid.*

§§ *Ibid.*

Workable Definition of Swadeshi :— It is not possible to give a comprehensive and exhaustive definition of Swadeshi. It is a spirit daily growing and undergoing variations. Yet Gandhiji had to evolve a workable definition as a part of political programme. Swadeshi accordingly covered useful articles manufactured in India through small industries which are in need of popular education for their support and which accept guidance from a properly constituted body in regulating prices and in matters of wages and welfare of labour under them. This definition excludes articles manufactured through the large and organized industries which are in no need of the services of a central public body and which can command State aid. They can stand on their own legs and can easily command a market.

The suggestion for restricting the scope of Swadeshi work to the encouragement and propagation of minor, small-scale, unorganized and particularly home industries is not to destroy major industries. Nor is it meant to ignore the benefit which such industries have bestowed on the country but it is not necessary for any public body to become the self-appointed advertising agents of those industries which have ample resources at their command and which can take care of themselves. The spirit of Swadeshi has been sufficiently generated, and it helps them without any effort of a public body. Any attempt to advertise the wares of large, organized industries can only result in putting a premium on such wares and in sending up the prices of their manufactures and in setting up unhealthy rivalries between flourishing but competing firms. It is a waste of effort to bring into being a philanthropic organization to help a successful organization. Becoming advertising agents of big business will do no good to the country.

Concentration of Effort on Minor Industries :— Any effort to be useful has to concentrate on the minor struggling industries which are in need of public support. Khadi is not the only struggling industry. If there were a

true Swadeshi organization, it would be its duty to find out the truth about all the innumerable handicrafts and interest itself in the craftsmen. Gandhiji would not take up each and every handicraft. He would examine each one of them to find out its place in the economy of village life and if he was convinced that they needed encouragement because of their inherent merit, he would do so.

Nature of Initial Swadeshi Exhibitions :— Ever since the first Swadeshi exhibition was held with the annual session of the Congress, it continued to be so held until 1936 when a departure from tradition was made. The earlier exhibitions used to be big shows and were designed for encouraging Swadeshi products and to meet the expenses of the Congress from the takings of the exhibition. The whole outlook was changed from 1936. At Lucknow, on 28th March 1936, Gandhiji opened an exhibition which did not display things of spectacular interest, but it was designed to give the spectators a glimpse of the Indian villager and his craft. It was the purpose of these exhibitions to show that even the starving India of the villages was capable of producing things which the town-dwellers might use both to the villagers' and their own advantage.* Everything that had no educative value was boycotted from this exhibition.

Beginning of Rural Exhibitions :— It is significant to remember that though a new orientation was visible in the outlook of the Congress, this exhibition was yet held in a city. Gandhiji pointed out that the exhibition was not organized for the villagers, but for the city-dweller to enable him to see how the villager lived and what he was capable of.†

Gandhiji had advanced within a month or two from his original stand. The next exhibition of his idea was organized in Maganwadi, Wardha in Madhya Pradesh. Declaring it open, Gandhiji observed :

“This exhibition is an attempt to educate the residents of Wardha in their duty towards the villages surrounding them, and

* *Harijan*, 4-4-'36.

† *Ibid.*

to educate the villagers in what is possible for them to better themselves in every way. This exhibition teaches them how to keep their villages clean, what food to eat, and how to improve their industries and thus earn a little more than they do today. So far as the town-dweller is concerned, the exhibition forcibly brings to his mind the various ways in which he is exploiting the villager, and how best he may serve the villager by going in for his wares." ‡

Gandhiji expressed the hope that the tendency in future would be to select not big cities but small towns for the venue of exhibitions. He exhorted those who had come to see the exhibition to go out as preachers of the gospel of rural-mindedness.

Rural Exhibitions :— Yet another landmark was recorded within a period of six months or so. This time Gandhiji originated the idea of having both the annual session of the Congress and the exhibition in a village. Faizpur, a village in West Khandesh District in Maharashtra, was chosen as the venue. Gandhiji now focussed all his attention on the villagers and his message was primarily addressed to them. He observed at the opening of this exhibition :

"This is a genuine village exhibition which has been brought into being by the labour of the villagers. It is a pure educative effort. It simply shows the villagers how to double their income if only they will use their hands and feet and the resources around them....In brief we have to teach them how to turn the waste into wealth, and that is what the exhibition is meant to teach them." §

To all those who had assembled at the exhibition he said :

"You could not but have noticed the grand simplicity of the procession that was organized for our President, especially the beautifully designed and decorated chariot drawn by six pairs of bullocks. Well, all that was designed in order to prepare you for what awaited you here—no city amenities or comforts, but everything that poor villagers could provide. The place is thus a place of pilgrimage for us all, our Kashi and our Mecca where we have come in order to offer our prayers for freedom and to consecrate ourselves to the nation's service. You have not come here to

‡ *Harijan*, 16-5-'36.

§ *Harijan*, 2-1-'37.

lord it over the poor peasants but to learn how to get off their backs by participating in their daily toil, by doing the scavenger's job, by washing for yourselves, by grinding your own floor,...not to take but to tender service." *

At the next annual session held at Haripura in Gujarat in February 1938, Gandhiji reiterated that the annual exhibition was a school of instruction. He referred to the spinning wheel as the centre of all handicrafts, asked the spectators to discover new handicrafts and to make the villages self-sufficient. When the next exhibition was held at Tripuri along with the annual session of the Congress in March 1939, Gandhiji was fasting in Rajkot in a heroic effort to vindicate the basic civil liberties of States people. He, therefore, could not be present to deliver an address. War was declared in 1939. The Congress Ministries resigned as a protest against the unilateral act of the Viceroy in declaring India as a participant in the War without consulting the representatives of the people. In March 1940, the annual session of the Congress was held at Ramgarh in Bihar under the ever lengthening shadows of the War. Gandhiji in his speech, while opening the exhibition, affirmed his faith in the superiority of the handicraft-civilization based on decentralization over the modern city civilization. A new phase had now opened in the life of the nation. Gandhiji became preoccupied with the struggle for freedom and no more exhibitions could be held as the Congress went into wilderness.

Khadi

The Image of Swadeshi :— Khadi has been conceived as the image of Swadeshi. Charkha provided a national employment to the whole of India a century ago. India had the spinning wheel before the advent of the East India Company, being a cotton growing country. Its destruction was designed and carried out in a most inhuman manner by the agents of the East India Company. It is not true to say that economic pressure and modern machinery destroyed hand-spinning and hand-weaving. This great

* *Harijan*, 2-1-'37.

industry was destroyed or almost destroyed by extraordinary and immoral means adopted by the East India Company.† No amount of appliances would ever have displaced this national art and industry but for the systematically cruel manner of carrying out the destruction.‡ The masses lost their freedom, such as it was, with the loss of the Charkha.§

A Tale of Ruin :— The Charkha or production of Khadi includes all the anterior and posterior processes — cotton growing, picking, ginning, cleaning, carding, slivering, spinning, sizing, dyeing, preparing the warp and the woof, weaving and washing.

The destruction of the ancient occupation brought on slavery, pauperism and disappearance of the inimitable artistic talent which was once all expressed in the wonderful fabric of India and which was the envy of the world.*

Since the wanton destruction of the central village industry and the allied handicrafts, intelligence and brightness have fled from the villages, leaving them inane, lustreless and reduced almost to the state of their ill-kept cattle.†† The rural atmosphere is surcharged with idleness and lack of faith and hope.

The Charkha enabled the seven hundred thousand villages in India to become self-contained. With the exit of the Charkha went the other village industries, such as the oil-press. Nothing took the place of these industries. Therefore the villages were drained of their varied occupations and their creative talent and what little wealth these brought them.‡‡

The Birth of Khadi :— The importance of Khadi and the spinning wheel first dawned on Gandhiji in 1908 when he had no idea what the wheel was like and did not know the distinction between the wheel and the loom. He had

† *Young India*, 18-8-'20.

‡ *Young India*, 8-12-'21.

§ *Harijan*, 13-4-'40.

* *Young India*, 16-2-'21.

†† M. K. Gandhi, *Constructive Programme*, 1941 Edition, p. 7.

‡‡ *Harijan*, 13-4-'40.

only a dim consciousness of the condition of India's villages, but still he clearly saw that the chief cause of their pauperization was the destruction of the spinning wheel and resolved that he would try to revive it when he returned to India.§

Aim of Khadi :—The spinning wheel movement aimed at restoring spinning to the millions of cottages of India from which it was removed by unjust, illegal and tyrannical methods.* The spinning wheel represented the hope of the masses. If villagers were to come into their own, the most natural thing that suggested itself was the revival of the Charkha and all it meant.†

In the year 1920 India produced less than half the amount of cloth required for her population on the basis of nearly thirteen yards of cloth per head per year. India grows all the cotton she needs. She exported several million bales of cotton to Japan and Lancashire and received much of it back in manufactured calico, although she was capable of producing all the cloth and all the yarn necessary for supplying her wants by hand-weaving and hand-spinning.‡

A Supplementary Industry and an Insurance against Famine :—The bulk of the peasantry in India is occupied only during four to six months in the year and therefore lives on the borderland of starvation. This is the normal condition. The ever-recurring famines make a large addition to her enforced idleness. What is the work these men and women can easily do in their own cottages so as to supplement their very slender resources? §§ Every agricultural country requires a supplementary industry to enable the peasants to utilize their spare hours. Such industry for India has always been spinning because it is remunerative.

§ *Harijan*, 19-12-'48.

* *Young India*, 21-11-'29.

† *Harijan*, 13-4-'40.

‡ *Young India*, 18-8-'20.

§§ *Young India*, 3-11-'21.

The Only Universal Industry :—“ The only universal industry for the millions is spinning and no other. That does not mean that other industries do not matter or are useless. Indeed from the individual standpoint any other industry would be more remunerative than spinning. Watch-making will be no doubt a most remunerative and fascinating industry. But how many can engage in it ? Is it of any use to millions of villagers ?...It is no use putting before famishing men a multiplicity of raw foods and expecting them to make their choice. They would not know what to do with them. They will probably run after the most tempting and perish in the attempt....Let those who can and wish to, by all means, take up any other. But national resources must be concentrated upon the one industry of hand-spinning which all can take up...and besides which the vast majority can take no other.” *

“ The spinning wheel is the most suitable and practicable occupation conceivable for many millions.” †

The people were becoming poorer economically, mentally and morally. They were fast losing the will to work, to think, and even to live. It was a living death that they were living. Khadi supplied them with work, tools and a ready market for their manufactures. It gave them hope where but yesterday there was blank despair.‡

Hand-spinning, Not for Lucratively Employed Persons :—Gandhiji never suggested that those who are more lucratively employed should give up their lucrative employment and take to hand-spinning. He said repeatedly, only those should be induced to spin who had no other paying employment and that too, during the hours of unemployment. “ The whole theory of hand-spinning is based upon the assumption that there are millions of men and women in this land who are idle for at least four months in the year for want of employment.” §

The moment these millions could have a better substitute they were at liberty to give up the spinning wheel. No one would have been more glad than Gandhiji to see the

* *Young India*, 30-9-'26.

† *Young India*, 12-4-'28.

‡ *Harijan*, 20-6-'36.

§ *Young India*, 22-10-'25.

millions possess a better substitute.* Until such time, if ever, when a better system of supplying work and adequate wages for every able-bodied person above the age of sixteen, was found for his field, cottage or even factory, in every one of the villages in India, or till sufficient cities were built up to displace the villages so as to give the villagers the necessary comforts and amenities that a well-regulated life demands and is entitled to, Khadi was the only true economic proposition in terms of the villagers. He had only to state the proposition thus fully to show that Khadi must hold the field for any length of time that one could think of.†

The Reason for Emphasis on Spinning Wheel instead of Handloom :—It may well be asked why not emphasize the handloom instead of the spinning wheel? Now, Gandhiji was not against the handloom. It is no doubt a great and thriving cottage industry.‡ But hand-weaving is a

“long process requiring sustained labour and in itself demanding several processes at which more persons than one are required to work at one and the same time. This is not possible in a peasant’s cottage. Hence from time immemorial hand-weaving has been a separate occupation and an independent and sole means of livelihood. A peasant requires an auxiliary occupation which he can take up or leave at will. Such an occupation for the millions is only hand-spinning.” §

Hand-weaving, an Independent Occupation :—“Hand-weaving is not a practical proposition as a supplementary industry, because it is not easy to teach, it has never been universal in India, it requires several hands to work at, it cannot be done during odd moments. It has been and can only be generally an independent occupation and is in the majority of cases the sole occupation like shoe-making or smithy.” **

The Stranglehold on Handloom Industry :—Moreover it is wrong for the handloom weaver to rely upon an un-failing supply of mill yarn for his handloom. His early

* *Young India*, 21-11-'29.

† *Harijan*, 20-6-'36.

‡ *Young India*, 11-11-'26.

§ *Young India*, 14-5-'25.

** *Young India*, 11-11-'26.

experience taught Gandhiji that the aim of the mills was more and more to weave the yarn spun by them; their co-operation with the handloom weaver was not willing but unavoidable and temporary.†

“Mill-owners are not philanthropists to go on providing yarn to the handloom weaver when he enters into effective competition with them.” ‡

“As soon as the mill-owners can do so profitably, they will certainly stop selling mill-yarn and will weave it themselves. They are not philanthropists. They have set up mills in order to make money. They will stop selling their yarn to handloom weavers, if they find weaving it more profitable.” §

“It is little known that a vast number of weavers of mill yarn are in the hands of *sowcars*, and they must be, so long as they rely upon the mill product. The village economy demands that the weaver should receive his yarn not from the middlemen but from his fellow worker, the farmer.” *

“The use of mill-yarn is the principal stranglehold on the handloom industry. In hand-spun yarn lies its only salvation. If the spinning wheel goes, the handloom is bound to follow suit.” ††

Hand-spinning and Hand-weaving Complementary :—

The hand-weavers are really fed by hand-spinners even as they in their turn are fed by handloom weavers. They are twins complementary to each other.‡‡ In short, hand-spinning and hand-weaving are mutually complementary. A weaver working on doubling hand-spun yarn will in the end be better off than the mill-yarn weaver, for, the former will find steady employment all the year round. §§ “The weavers will be ultimately responsible for killing their own occupation by excluding hand-spun yarn.” ** The handloom will progress automatically if the spinning wheel succeeds. It is bound to die if the wheel fails.†††

The Place of Mill Industry :— “There is not the slightest

† M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, Part V, Chap. XXXIX.

‡ *Harijan*, 25-8-'46.

§ *Harijan*, 31-3-'46.

* *Young India*, 11-11-'26.

†† *Harijan*, 25-8-'46.

‡‡ *Harijan*, 31-3-'46.

§§ *Harijan*, 25-8-'46.

** *Harijan*, 31-3-'46.

††† *Young India*, 11-11-'26.

reason why the spinning wheel may not co-exist with the spinning mill even as the domestic kitchen co-exists with the hotels." ‡

"If the mills work not for exploiting the masses as they now do, but for serving them, they will supplement the products of the cottage spinning wheel and the handloom and not supersede them as they now do." §

The mills should refrain from manufacturing those varieties that can be easily produced by Khadi organizations thus freeing their energy for manufacturing more of the varieties that cannot be easily manufactured by Khadi organizations.

"Our mills cannot spin enough for our wants, and if they did, they would not keep down prices unless they were compelled. They are frankly money-makers and will not therefore regulate prices according to the needs of the nation." *

The Swadeshi movement of Bengal during the partition days suffered a check because of the greed and dishonesty of mill-owners. They inflated prices and even sold foreign cloth in the name of Swadeshi. Indeed the facts about spurious Khadi that were brought to light showed that the mills would not be slow to exploit the Swadeshi spirit for their own benefit as opposed to the larger interests of the consumers.† The mill-owners do not realize that a policy of grab is likely to damage both the cause of Swadeshi and the country.‡‡ They should standardize their prices and limit their profits to a minimum. The surplus, if any, should be devoted to the improvement of the condition of the labourers.§§

The Check of Khadi on the Greed of Mills :— "Khadi production and Khadi propaganda act at once as a check upon the greed of mills and also, strange as it may appear, as an indirect but very effective encouragement to mills in their struggle against foreign competition.... Stop exclusive Khadi propaganda, play with mill cloth and you will kill Khadi and in the long run you will kill even mill cloth, for it cannot by itself stand foreign competition." **

‡ *Young India*, 21-7-'20.

§ *Young India*, 12-4-'28.

* *Harijan*, 20-6-'36.

† *Young India*, 10-5-'28.

‡‡ *Young India*, 23-2-'22.

§§ *Young India*, 15-3-'28.

** *Young India*, 10-5-'28.

The Claim for Khadi:—Gandhiji claimed for the Charkha the honour of being able to solve the problem of economic distress in a most natural, simple, inexpensive and business-like manner.† What was claimed for spinning by him was : ‡

(1) It supplies the readiest occupation to those who have leisure and are in want of a few coppers ;

(2) It is known to the thousands ;

(3) It is easily learnt ;

(4) It requires practically no outlay or capital ;

(5) The wheel can be easily and cheaply made ;

(6) The people have no repugnance to it ;

(7) It affords immediate relief in time of famine and scarcity ;

(8) It alone can stop the drain of wealth, which goes out in the purchase of foreign cloth ;

(9) It automatically distributes the millions thus saved among the deserving poor ;

(10) Even the smallest success means so much immediate gain to the people ;

(11) It is the most potent instrument of securing co-operation among the people.

The Different Phases of Khadi Movement:—Khadi has passed through several phases during its history. From being an antique rarity, it became the symbol of India's non-violent struggle for freedom. Originally, Khadi was a supplementary industry to agriculture. Its mission was not merely to supply the townspeople with fashionable Khadi which would vie with the mill manufactures or provide, like other industries, a few artisans with employment, but to enable the peasants to utilize gainfully their spare hours.§ Just as the villagers cook their own food so should they make their own Khadi for their personal use. The surplus, if any, they might sell.*

In the early twenties, Gandhiji's economic ideas became realistic. He concerned himself with problems of production and distribution of wealth and strove to

† *Young India*, 8-12-'21.

‡ *Young India*, 21-8-'24.

§ *Harijan*, 6-7-'35.

* *Ibid.*

popularize the spinning wheel with a view to prevent concentration of power and capital and to bring about an equitable distribution of wealth. In 1925, he established the All-India Spinners' Association with an object to make the whole of India Khadi-clad.

His views on Khadi underwent a further change and in 1935, there was a transference of the emphasis from the commercial to the self-help aspect of Khadi. The essential function of the A.I.S.A. was defined to be educative. Under the new orientation, Khadi Bhandars were visualized as centres for imparting instruction in various processes of Khadi production rather than depots for the sale of Khadi for money.† Self-sufficing Khadi was given the first place in all Khadi organizations.‡

When the emphasis was put on self-sufficient Khadi, commercial production was restricted to the real wants of townspeople.§ In a way self-sufficing Khadi and production for sale went together. Production for sale became a by-product of self-sufficing Khadi.*

In the initial stages the emphasis was on bringing relief to the poor. Incidentally, it provided a living link between the rich and the poor and assumed a political significance. So far it was spun and woven by the masses. Now it was still by the masses but principally for their own use. This change was necessitated because of the defect spotted by Gandhiji in the development of Khadi. The villagers who spun yarn and wove Khadi did not use it themselves. They neither understood nor appreciated the dignity and value that its use carried. So the A.I.S.A. was made to concentrate its resources to making the villagers Khadi-clad.††

Khadi was from its inception conceived for the sake of reversing the existing unnatural order though never to bleed the townspeople. To reverse the order was to restore

† *Harijan*, 6-7-'35.

‡ *Harijan*, 26-10-'35.

§ *Harijan*, 6-7-'35.

* *Harijan*, 26-10-'35.

†† *Harijan*, 21-7-'46.

the natural relation.‡ The mission of Khadi was almost like that of the removal of untouchability. The so-called higher classes had for ages utterly neglected the lower classes. It was given to Khadi to correct the double evil by inviting the upper classes to penance towards the lower classes.§

Implications of Khadi :— “Khadi must be taken with all its implications. It means a wholesale Swadeshi mentality, a determination to find all the necessities of life in India, and that too through the labour and intellect of the villagers. That means a reversal of the existing process. That is to say that, instead of half a dozen cities in India...living on the exploitation and the ruin of the 7,00,000 villages of India, the latter will be largely self-contained, and will voluntarily serve the cities of India and even the outside world in so far as it benefits both the parties.” *

Khadi connotes the beginning of economic freedom and equality of all in the country. It is “the symbol of unity of Indian humanity, of its economic freedom and equality, and therefore ultimately in the expression of Pandit Nehru ‘the livery of India’s freedom’.” †

In his *Wealth of Nations* Adam Smith laid down certain principles according to which economic phenomena are governed. He went on to describe the things which constituted the ‘disturbing factor’ and which prevented economic laws from having free play. Chief among these was the ‘human element’. Now it is this human element on which the entire economics of Khadi rests. And human selfishness, Adam Smith’s pure economic motive which constitutes the ‘disturbing factor’ has got to be overcome. What applies to the production of mill cloth, therefore, does not apply to Khadi. Debasing of quality, adulteration, pandering to the baser tastes of humanity, are current staple in commercialized production ; they have no place in Khadi nor has the principle of highest profit and lowest wages any place in Khadi. In Khadi, the prices realized return to the prime producers,

‡ *Harijan*, 21-7-'46.

§ *Harijan*, 6-7-'35.

* M. K. Gandhi, *Constructive Programme*, (1941 Edition), p. 7.

† *Ibid.*

the spinners, the others getting no more than their hire.‡
 “Khadi is a symbol not of commercial war but of commercial peace.” §

The Largest Co-operative Society :— spinning cannot succeed without co-operation. Through hand-spinning, Gandhiji was trying to found the largest co-operative society known to the world. This was not an untrue claim ; it might have been ambitious. It was not untrue because hand-spinning could not serve the purpose for which it was intended, unless millions actually co-operated in it. Co-operation from the very commencement was necessary. If spinning made one self-reliant, it also enabled one to understand the necessity of inter-dependence almost at every step and co-operation on a large scale from millions in regard to the cultivation and disposal of the produce.*

A Typical Khadi Centre :— Gandhiji described a typical centre thus :

“ The centre to be useful must keep itself clean in every sense of the term. The bond between it and the component parts of the vast organization is purely spiritual or moral. A spinning centre, therefore, is a co-operative society whose members are ginnerers, carders, spinners, weavers and buyers—all tied together by common bond, mutual goodwill and service.” †

Khadi Organization, a Philanthropic Institution :— “ Khaddar in a sense is a purely economic proposition. A khaddar organization must be a business concern before everything else. The democratic principle, therefore, cannot apply to it. Democracy necessarily means a conflict of will and ideas, involving sometimes a war to the knife between these different ideas. There can be no room for such conflict within a business organization. Imagine parties, groups and the like in a business concern. It must break to pieces under their weight. But a Khadi organization is more than a business concern. It is a philanthropic institution designed to serve demos. Such an institution cannot be governed by popular fancy. There is no room in it for personal ambition.” ‡‡

Khadi and Political Organization :— “ The two issues of Khadi and political organization should be kept absolutely separate.

‡ *Harijan*, 21-9-'34.

§ *Young India*, 8-12-'21.

* *Young India*, 10-6-'26.

† *Ibid.*

‡‡ *Harijan*, 21-9-'34.

There must be no confusion. The aim of Khadi is humanitarian, but so far as India is concerned, its effect is bound to be immensely political.” §

Incidentally, Khadi was the instrument of mass contact. So, if the idleness of the people could be broken through Khadi, they would begin to listen to those who approached them with bread. Thus trust could be best generated through Khadi. While working out the Khadi programme, the aim was to be purely humanitarian, that is, economic, leaving out all political considerations whatsoever. Through Khadi people could be taught the art of civil obedience to an institution which they had built up for themselves. Only when they learnt that art could they successfully disobey something which they wanted to destroy in a non-violent way.*

A Symbol of Non-violence :— The Charkha must lead to Swaraj in terms of masses belonging to all faiths. It restores villages to their rightful place and abolishes distinctions between high and low. In 1919 the lovers of the liberty of India were introduced to non-violence as the only sure means of Swaraj and to the Charkha, as a symbol of non-violence. There is no other symbol of non-violence than the Charkha. Without its universalization, there would be no visible expression of non-violence.†

Society based on non-violence can only consist of groups settled in villages in which voluntary co-operation is the condition of dignified and peaceful existence.‡

The Place of Khadi in the Post-Independence Era :— Does Khadi have any place in the post-independence era is a legitimate question. To such a query, Gandhiji's reply was :

“Khadi represents and represented a way of life based on non-violence. Rightly or wrongly, it is my opinion that practical disappearance of Khadi and non-violence shows that the main implication of Khadi was not grasped by us during all these years.

§ *The Modern Review*, October 1935.

* *Ibid.*

† *Harijan*, 13-4-'40.

‡ *Harijan*, 13-1-'40.

Hence, the tragedy we witness of fratricidal strife and the lawlessness on many sides. I have no doubt that spinning and weaving of Khadi are more important than ever if we are to have freedom that is to be instinctively felt by the masses of the villages of India. That is the Kingdom of God on earth. Through Khadi we are striving for equality of all men and women in the place of the gross inequality to be witnessed today. We were striving to attain subservience of capital under labour in the place of the insolent triumph of capital over labour. Unless, therefore, all the effort made during the past thirty years in India was a retrograde step, hand-spinning and all it implies must be prosecuted with much greater vigour and far greater intelligence than hitherto.” §

Khadi, the Pivot of Village Industries :—“Khadi is the central sun round which the other village industries revolve like so many planets. They have no independent existence. Nor will Khadi exist without the other industries. They are absolutely interdependent. The fact is that we have to make a choice between India of the villages that are as ancient as herself and India of the cities which are a creation of foreign domination. Today the cities dominate and drain the villages so that they are crumbling to ruin....Exploiting of villages is itself organized violence. If we want Swaraj to be built on non-violence we shall have to give villages their proper place. This we will never do unless we revive village industries by using the products thereof in place of things produced in city factories, foreign or indigenous.” *

It would now become clear why Gandhiji identified Khadi with non-violence. Khadi is the chief village handicraft. Kill Khadi and you must kill the villages and with them non-violence. This cannot be proved by statistics. The proof is before our eyes.†

Village Industries Other than Khadi

The Necessity of Constructive Activities :—Towards the end of 1933 and the beginning of 1934, the civil disobedience campaign initiated by Gandhiji had passed its peak point and Congressmen all over the country were asking ‘What next?’ It appeared that paralysis had overtaken all those who were outside the jails. At this time Gandhiji realized more than ever before the necessity of constructive activities. No doubt they had become an integral part of the Congress programme that was framed in

§ *Harijan*, 21-12-'47.

* *Harijan*, 20-1-'40.

† *Ibid*.

1920. But not being spectacular, they had fallen into background. With civil resistance as the background, the nation could not possibly do without the constructive activities. If every citizen learnt to contribute his share to the work of building up the house of independence through constructive activity and realized its importance, dark as the horizon seemed there was absolutely no cause for despair or disappointment. Therefore, in 1934, Gandhiji established the All-India Village Industries Association. The object of the A.I.V.I.A. was to revive the moribund cottage industries of India.

Village Industries, a Handmaid to Khadi:—Village industries stand on a different footing from Khadi. There is not much scope for voluntary labour in them. Each industry can take care of only a certain number of hands. These industries come in as a handmaid to Khadi. They cannot exist without Khadi and Khadi will be robbed of its dignity without them. Village economics cannot be complete without the essential village industries such as hand-grinding, hand-pounding, soap-making, paper-making, match-making, tanning, oil-pressing etc. Given the demand, there is no doubt that most of our wants can be supplied from our villages.‡

The Industrial and Agrarian Scene

True Social Economics:—True social economics teaches us that the worker and the employer are parts of the indivisible organism. None is smaller or greater than the other. Their interests should not be conflicting but are identical and interdependent.§

Duties of Employers:—What is expected of an employer? Firstly, honesty in all his transactions. It is difficult but not impossible to conduct strictly honest business. What is true is that honesty is incompatible with the amassing of a large fortune.*

‡ M. K. Gandhi, *Constructive Programme*, (1941 Edition), p. 11.

§ *Young India*, 3-5-'28.

* *Harijan*, 28-7-'46.

Dishonest practices in business are not excusable. The principle of unconditional honesty is as binding in this as in any other field of life, and it is up to a businessman never to compromise his principle no matter what it may cost him.†

There cannot be two opinions as to the fact that mill-owners, no less than other business and commercial firms, ought to take a parental interest in the welfare of their employees. The relations between the employer and the employee ought not to be merely those of master and servant.‡

Many an employer considers that their duty towards their employees is nothing more than to provide for their material needs. One such well-meaning tea-planter wrote to Gandhiji gratuitously advising him to suspend the non-co-operation movement and take to methods of legislation for bettering the lot of labourers. Of him Gandhiji wrote :

“ I have seen, both in Natal and Champaran, the writer's prototypes. He means well, but does not know that he is no more than a kind cattle-keeper. Once admit that men may be treated like cattle, many a European manager would earn a certificate of merit from a Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Society. I know from experience that free medicine, free medical attendance, free housing accommodation and free grazing ground are so many tricks of the trade, designed to keep the ‘ coolie ’ a serf for ever. He would be a freer man for being paid full wages and charged for housing and medicine.” §

In Gandhiji's opinion, amenities like the medical relief should not be free. They should be genuine, prompt and cheap. Free aid is likely to undermine the independent spirit of recipients. Sometimes free aid is rendered perfunctorily and sometimes it is abused, from both of which evils they should be saved.*

Rights and Duties of Workers :— What are the rights and duties of workers ? It is simple to understand that their right is to receive as high a wage as the industry can

† *Harijan*, 13-3-'37.

‡ *Young India*, 3-5-'28.

§ *Young India*, 29-6-'21.

* *Young India*, 3-5-'28.

bear and their duty is to work to the best of their ability for the wage they receive.†

The real hunger of workers which needs to be satisfied is not for morsels of food but for decent living as self-respecting, equal citizens, for a square deal as human beings, for freedom from fear, inculcation of clean and sanitary habits, thrift, industry and education.‡ They must become men of culture and must cultivate an exemplary purity, honesty, uprightness of conduct. That requires perseverance, self-sacrifice and patient, intelligent labouring on their part.

Conditions of Work :—In a few articles Gandhiji also dealt with problems vitally affecting labour such as evils of recruitment, hours of work, safety, health and housing. He deprecated the system of recruiting labour through *sardars*. Freedom of contract is lost as soon as a tout intervenes whose business it is to get labour somehow or other. A tout paints a rosy picture for the would-be recruit of the conditions of labour, to seduce him to leave his village only to disillusion him in the end. It is wrong to import labour so long as there are poor people in the region who are without employment.§

He pleaded for shortening the excessive hours of work. The world's experience shows that long hours do not mean more but actually less work.* Those who have to work very long hours can have no time left for mental or moral betterment. It is not surprising if their condition is reduced to that of the beast.†† It simply requires a little courage and a little initiative to make the much needed reform voluntarily and generously — a reform that is otherwise bound to come in any case. But then when it comes under pressure it loses all its grace. Shorter hours of employees is a world movement which nobody can

† *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, G. A. Natesan & Co., (4th Edition), p. 1045.

‡ *Harijan*, 29-9-'46.

§ *Young India*, 2-9-'26.

* *Young India*, 22-10-'25.

†† *Young India*, 28-4-'20.

stop.‡ In a speech made in 1920 Gandhiji urged the mill-owners of Ahmedabad to reduce the hours of labour from twelve to ten and the labour to give as much work in ten as they had been doing in twelve.§

Overwork is another evil which some classes of workers suffer from. This is particularly true of rickshaw-pullers who work so hard that they die of lung and heart trouble within four years or so. He made this observation after studying the conditions of rickshawmen in a hill station. How can the rickshaw-users be so callous as not to see that they were not overworked, he wondered.*

Employment of Children:—He pleaded for raising the age limit of children for employment in factories.†

“It is a sign of national degradation when little children are removed from schools and are employed in earning wages. No nation worthy of the name can possibly afford so to misuse her children. At least up to the age of sixteen they must be kept in schools.” ‡‡

Safety:—In an article he praised the care with which lives of employees were regarded by the Government in England. Meticulous care was exercised in devising methods of not only protecting employees engaged in dirty or injurious trades but also of protecting the public. Contrasting this with the treatment of Harijan workers in India, he said that much more care was necessary in Indian climate for protecting the so-called untouchables engaged in dusty or dirty processes and for protecting also the public from contamination caused by the workers in such employment becoming live carriers of dust and dirt.§§ For scavengers he advocated bye-laws requiring authorized receptacles, brooms etc., which would avoid physical handling of dirt, and prescribing a simple working costume. The result of the present system was maximum of insanitation and minimum of work plus bribery,

‡ *Young India*, 22-10-'25.

§ *Young India*, 28-4-'20.

* *Harijan*, 16-6-'46.

† *Young India*, 25-7-'29.

‡‡ *Young India*, 28-4-'20 and 5-5-'20

§§ *Harijan*, 1-4-'33.

corruption and bad manners. So inspectors or overseers should be trained for this humane and sanitary work instead of being expected to exact work anyhow.*

A Minimum Standard of Housing :— While the industrial concerns declared fat dividends of 30 to 40 per cent, they provided no housing facilities for their lowest paid employees. In some places those who earned the profits for them were housed in dismal hovels. Numerous municipalities were also callous about the housing needs of their low-paid employees. In this connection, he pleaded for something like a minimum standard of housing for the unmarried, married couples and for couples with children. It was essential for the employers to provide for this primary want of the employees.†

Wages :— Of Gandhiji's writings on the problem of wages only a few deal with wages in a large-scale industry like the cotton textile industry at Ahmedabad. The rest discuss the minimum wage and standardization of wages in cottage industries and hand-spinning.

Gandhiji welcomed the bold enunciation of the doctrine propounded by the Umpire in his Award in the wage dispute in the cotton textile industry at Ahmedabad that where a worker does not get enough wages to enable him to maintain a suitable standard of living he can ask his employer to pay him wages which will enable him to do so.‡ In order to do justice to the toiling millions we must pay them a wage that will sustain them and must not take advantage of their helplessness.§ In fact, if it is not possible for any industry to pay this minimum living wage it had better close its shop.*

The minimum wage must ensure to all workmen :
(a) a reasonably balanced †† and adequate nutritive diet ‡‡

* *Harijan*, 6-10-'46.

† *Harijan*, 11-7-'36.

‡ *Young India*, 12-12-'29.

§ *Harijan*, 13-7-'35.

* *Harijan*, 31-8-'35.

†† *Ibid.*

‡‡ *Harijan*, 16-1-'37.

to enable a man to keep fit to put in eight hours' normal quota of efficient work all the year round,§ (b) minimum clothing requirements,* and (c) better housing and other ordinary comforts.†

The fixation of a minimum wage for the hand-spinners was objected to by some on the ground that the spinners themselves would plump for a smaller wage for all and that in no case should the worker's minimum wage exceed the wage of an agriculturist.‡ The former is an argument of every exploiter and slaveowner. The latter Gandhiji countered by retorting that there was no such thing as an agriculturist's wage and the peasant's condition is no standard. A peasant hardly gets enough out of his land to keep his body and soul together and hardly enough even to pay his rent.§§ Philanthropic associations like the A.I.S.A. and the A.I.V.I.A. could not follow the commercial maxim of buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest as their aim was not to produce village articles as cheap as possible but it was to provide the workless villagers with work at a living wage.** The only standard therefore was to secure to the peasant his daily bread. To seek to pay anything less would be criminal.††

The most difficult question which confronted Gandhiji was the determination of a minimum national wage for hand-spinning and other village industries. He arrived at the figure of eight annas for eight hours' strenuous labour converted into a given quantity of the particular goods turned out by an artisan of good ability.‡‡

He saw no reason why a spinner in Bihar should get less than his counterpart in Gujarat. No doubt prices vary in different provinces because the standard of living varies.

§ *Harijan*, 16-1-'37 and 31-8-'35.

* *Harijan*, 16-1-'37.

† *Young India*, 12-12-'29.

‡ *Harijan*, 14-9-'35.

§§ *Ibid.*

** *Harijan*, 13-7-'35.

†† *Harijan*, 14-9-'35.

‡‡ *Harijan*, 13-7-'35.

But the A.I.S.A. could not afford to take things as they were. It had to change them if they were unjust. §

It must be remembered that eight annas per day for a village artisan was not an insignificant remuneration in the thirties. It compared favourably with the minimum wage of an industrial worker then prevalent in the country. Within three to four years the A.I.S.A. tried to take up the wage progressively to the standard of eight annas per day but it failed in its experiment. Analysing the reasons for failure, Gandhiji observed as follows :

“Generally nowhere in rural areas do village labourers or artisans earn eight annas for eight hours’ work. Spinners could not earn eight annas without all the other classes doing likewise. And the purchasing classes simply have not the money to pay an all-round wage of eight annas per day unless conditions are radically altered. The crushing and unproductive military burden drains the country dry. Add to this the inordinately high salaries and correspondingly high pensions paid, and spent abroad. There are other internal causes also for gnawing poverty.” *

All these reasons though important in themselves do not explain fully why the goal of eight annas wage per day could not be reached. In an earlier article, he had mentioned a significant factor which was primarily responsible for the failure to reach the goal, namely, ignorance of the science of Khadi. The spinning wheel which was being plied in the villages was not an efficient unit of production and could not therefore ensure a satisfactory remuneration to the spinner. This state of affairs is even true today. That is why the All-India Khadi Board had seriously to think of improving the efficiency of the spinning wheel. It has sponsored an improved model of the wheel which is being tested and tried out at more than 250 centres throughout the country. If the experiment succeeds then hand-spinning will have some future and it can still be the hope of the villager.

After the minimum is assured to every labourer, does it mean that there should be no differences in rates varying

§ *Harijan*, 6-7-'35.

* *Harijan*, 26-8-'39.

with skill? We have already noted that Gandhiji was not opposed to higher earnings by an intelligent worker. But he wanted to abolish irrational differences which had their origin in historical reasons but had no relevance to existing conditions. There was no reason why the price of one hour's labour in spinning should be less than one in weaving. There is more skill involved in spinning than in simple weaving. Simple weaving is a purely mechanical process. Simplest spinning requires the cunning of the hand. Yet the spinner got one pie per hour against the weaver's minimum of six. The carder too, did better — almost as well as the weaver. There were historical reasons for this state of things. But they were not just merely because they were historical. The Spinners' Association was therefore called upon to equalize the prices of all labour regulated by it. This meant inviting the weaver to lower his scale of wages even if the weavers did not consent to the equalization process voluntarily. If the doctrine of equalization of wages for all productive labour was sound, efforts had to be made to approach the ideal as near as might be.†

Limitations of Legislation :— Legislation is one of the methods for improving the condition of labour but it has its limitations. Legislation, in advance of public opinion, is often worse than useless. Not until employers begin to look upon labourers as members of their own family or until the latter are educated to understand their own rights and know the method of securing them will they be able to better their position.‡

Labour Must Bestir Themselves :— Today capital controls labour because it knows the art of combination.§ Labour must bestir themselves to improve their own condition. The thing that they have to realize is that labour is as much capital as metal. It is wrong to think that

† *Harijan*, 6-7-'35.

‡ *Young India*, 29-6-'21.

§ *Harijan*, 7-9-'47.

a piece of metal or ever so much produce constitutes capital. Labour as a matter of fact is as much money as a metallic coin. If capital is power so is work. Either power could be used constructively or destructively Either is dependent on the other. Immediately the worker realizes his strength he is in a position to become a co-sharer of the capitalist instead of becoming his slave. That realization can come only through acceptance of non-violence. This kind of education of the mass of workers is no doubt a slow process but as it is also the surest, it is necessarily the quickest.*

Is Labour Helpless ? :— It is the grossest superstition for working men to believe that they are helpless before the employers.† If the workers only knew what they could do for themselves by training and intelligent combination they would realize that they were no less proprietors of the concern in which they worked than the manager and shareholders.‡ Labour because it chose to remain unintelligent, either became subservient or insolently believed in damaging capitalists' goods and machinery or even killing capitalists. Violence would never save them. When labour was intelligent enough to co-operate with itself it would offer co-operation to capital on terms of honourable equality. As soon as labourers are properly educated and organized and realize their strength no amount of capital can subdue them. Organized and enlightened labour can dictate their own terms.

How Labour can Come into Their Own ? :— How can labour come into their own ? Combination amongst themselves in the form of unions is undoubtedly the first essential. Experience tells us that a union can become one of the causes of bondage if certain other conditions are not complied with. These are :

(a) Each person should consider himself to be a trustee for the welfare of the rest of his fellow labourers

* *Young India*, 26-3-'31 and *Harijan*, 25-6-'38.

† *Harijan*, 3-7-'37.

‡ *Harijan*, 13-6-'36.

and not be self-seeking. He must be and remain non-violent under circumstances however grave and provoking.

(b) If he will be man and realize his dignity he must give up drink, avoid gambling and get rid of similar vices. A man under the influence of drink is reduced to the state of a beast. The curse of drink corrupts the soul within. He must lead a life of self-restraint and observe the sanctity of marriage. Rather than accept work on insufficient wages as would render it impossible for one to observe the primary laws of morality it would be better for him to face starvation.§

Labour should use its union for internal reformation as for defence against assault from outside. It must have more wages, less work in so far as they can be means to maintain clean houses, clean bodies, clean minds and a clean soul. If that be not the object to be achieved it would be a sin to attempt to get better wages and reduce the hours of labour.*

While it is quite proper to insist upon the rights and privileges it is imperative that one should recognize the obligation that every right carries with it. There is no right in the world that does not presuppose a duty. Whilst it would be proper to insist upon adequate wages, proper humane treatment from one's employers, good sanitary lodgings, it must be recognized that one should treat the business of his employers as if it was his own and give it their honest and undivided attention.†

Education for Non-violent Action :— Unfortunately in most cases both the peasants and labour are not educated for non-violent action. They are kept in a state of perpetual excitement and made to entertain hopes which can never be fulfilled without a violent conflict. Both the peasantry and labour can be organized for effective non-violent action through proper education. They need to be informed that if they are properly organized they have

§ D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. II, p. 393.

* *Young India*, 5-8-'20.

† D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. II, pp. 393-94.

more wealth and resources through their labour than the capitalists through their money. Only capitalists have control over the money market ; labour has not over its labour market, although if labour had been well served by its chosen leaders, it would have become conscious of the irresistible power that comes from proper instruction in non-violence. Instead, labour in many cases is taught to rely on coercive methods to compel compliance with its demands. The kind of training that labour generally receives today leaves it in ignorance with the result that it relies upon violence as the ultimate sanction.‡

A Model Union :—Gandhiji was responsible for the organization of Ahmedabad labour. In his opinion the Textile Labour Association of Ahmedabad is a model for all India to copy.

“ Its basis is non-violence pure and simple. It has never had a set-back in its career. It has gone on from strength to strength without fuss and without show. It has its hospital, its schools for the children of the mill-hands, its classes for adults, its own printing press and Khadi depot and its own residential quarters. Almost all the hands are voters and decide the fate of elections. They came on the voters’ list at the instance of the Provincial Congress Committee. The organization has never taken part in party politics of the Congress. It influences the Municipal policy of the City. It has to its credit very successful strikes which were wholly non-violent. Mill-owners and labour have governed their relations largely through voluntary arbitration.” §

If he had his way Gandhiji would regulate all the labour organizations of India after the Ahmedabad model. Through this Labour Union he had been endeavouring to enforce the method of non-violence in connection with questions arising between capital and labour.*

Peasant Movement in Champaran :—Those who would know Gandhiji’s method of organizing Kisans may profitably study the movement in Champaran where Satyagraha was tried for the first time in India. “ It became a

‡ *Harijan*, 29-7-'39.

§ M. K. Gandhi, *Constructive Programme*, (1941 Edition), p. 20.

* *Young India*, 14-1-'32.

mass movement which remained wholly non-violent from start to finish. It affected over twenty lakhs of Kisans. The struggle centred round one specific grievance which was a century old. There had been several violent revolts, to get rid of the grievance. They were suppressed. The non-violent remedy succeeded in full in six months.”†

Other Kisan Movements :—“The reader may also profitably study the Kisan movement in Kheda, Bardoli and Borsad. The secret of success lies in refusal to exploit the Kisan for political purposes outside their own personal and felt grievances. Organization round a specific wrong they would understand. Then they do not need sermons on non-violence. They apply an effective remedy which they can understand, and later when they are told that the method they were applying was non-violent, they readily recognize it as such.”‡

The Sheet-Anchor of a Labour Organization's Policy :—Every labour organization with faith in non-violence must be guided in its policy by its sense of right and not by the line of winning cheap popularity. If it is convinced that it is working on the right line, it will keep on to it, regardless of what others might or might not do. Thus it may induce *hartals* or organize strikes not from political motives or for such purposes but for bettering the social or economic position of its members.

Strikes

The Memorable Strike of 1918 :—Gandhiji was an expert in organized strikes. His first successful attempt was made in South Africa under most adverse circumstances. He improved the technique in the Ahmedabad strike in 1918. From his experience he could say that strikes could be made irresistible.§

During the twenty-one days that that strike lasted Gandhiji issued a series of leaflets for the workers. They constitute a comprehensive manual on the non-violent technique of conducting a struggle for workers' just

† M. K. Gandhi, *Constructive Programme*, (1941 Edition), p. 20.

‡ *Ibid.*

§ *Harijan*, 20-4-'40.

demands. It outlines the events leading to the lock-out commenced by the mill-owners of Ahmedabad and the pledge taken by the workers that they would not go back to work unless their demand was conceded. It gives detailed instructions as to how the strikers should conduct themselves to carry out their pledge, how they should utilize their enforced leisure, how the union leaders were to help the workers to fulfil their pledge and discusses what constitutes justice. It recounts the heroic tales of South African Satyagrahis and tells the strikers how they should sustain their morale in the face of all odds, hardships and temptations. In conclusion, it describes the triumph of Satyagraha in bringing victory to both parties.

Conditions of a Successful Strike:—He laid down seven conditions for a successful strike :

(1) The cause of the strike must be just * and there should be no strike without a grievance.†

(2) There should be practical unanimity among the strikers.‡

“ Both the demands and the means adopted to enforce them must be just and clear. It is an unlawful demand which seeks merely to take advantage of the capitalists’ position.” ¶ Strikers must fix an unalterable minimum demand and declare it before embarking upon their strike.§ Clause (1) of the pledge taken by workers in Ahmedabad during the 1918 strike declared that the workers would not resume work until a 35 per cent increase in their wages was secured. The demand for increase of 35 per cent was decided as proper after discussions amongst the workers and their leaders.

(3) There must be perfect correspondence and understanding between the strikers and their leaders.††

* *Young India*, 16-2-'21.

† *Young India*, 22-9-'21.

‡ *Young India*, 16-2-'21.

¶ *Young India*, 28-4-'20.

§ *Young India*, 22-9-'21.

†† *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, G. A. Natesan & Co., (4th Edition), p. 1045.

Labour in India has two classes of leaders, the leaders derived from themselves and outsiders who advise and lead the worker-leaders. Unless there is perfect correspondence between these two classes of leaders and labour there is bound to be a failure.‡

(4) There should be no violence.*

(5) Non-strikers or blacklegs should never be molested.†

A strike should be spontaneous and not manipulated. If it is organized without any compulsion there would be no chance for *goondaism* and looting. Such a strike would be characterized by perfect co-operation among the strikers. It should be peaceful and there should be no show of force.‡ There should be no pressure exerted upon those who are called blacklegs. Any force of this kind exerted against fellow-labourers is bound to react upon the strikers.‡‡

How should the blacklegs be treated ? Strikers should not fight them but plead with them, tell them that theirs is a narrow policy and that they, (the strikers) have the interest of the whole labour at heart. It is likely that they may not listen in which case they should be tolerated but not fought.§ The pledge which the workers took in 1918 strike in Ahmedabad had stipulated that during the period of the strike they would not cause any disturbance, indulge in beating or assaulting, commit robbery, damage employer's property, use abusive language and that they would remain peaceful. If the strike is justified the institution against which it has been declared should be condemned if it employs blacklegs or other questionable means to force strikers into submission.**

‡ *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, G. A. Natesan & Co., (4th Edition), p. 1045.

* *Young India*, 16-2-'21 and M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, Part V, Chap. XX.

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Harijan*, 2-6-'46.

‡‡ *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, G. A. Natesan & Co., (4th Edition), p. 1045.

§ *Harijan*, 7-11-'36.

** *Harijan*, 31-3-'46.

(6) Strikers should not depend upon public subscriptions or rather charities,‡ alms § or upon union funds for maintaining themselves during the strike period.*

No labour can prolong a strike indefinitely so long as it looks to pecuniary support from public subscriptions or alms or depends on the resources of its union and no strike can absolutely succeed which cannot be indefinitely prolonged.†

(7) To remain firm, no matter how long the strike continues ; in order to do so strikers must be able to support themselves out of their own savings or by engaging themselves in some useful and productive temporary occupation or by any honest labour.¶

“ A mill-hand's life is ever full of vicissitudes. Thrift and economy no doubt provide a sort of a remedy and it would be criminal to neglect them. But the saving thus made cannot carry one far seeing that the vast bulk of our mill-labourers are always struggling on the line of bare subsistence. Moreover, it would never do for a working man during strike or unemployment to rest idly at home. There is nothing more injurious to his morale and self-respect than enforced idleness. The working class will never feel secure and develop a sense of self-assurance and strength unless its members are armed with an unfailing subsidiary means of subsistence to serve as a second string to their bow in a crisis.” ‡‡

How Strikers should Utilize Their Time :— In all the strikes that Gandhiji conducted he laid down one indispensable rule that labourers must find their own support and take up their work either singly or in co-operation with each other. Therein lies the secret of success and therein consists the education of workers. They should be able to perceive that if they are able to serve one master and

‡ *Young India*, 22-9-'21.

§ M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, Part V, Chap. XX.

* *Young India*, 16-2-'21.

† *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, G. A. Natesan & Co., (4th Edition), p. 1045.

¶ *Young India*, 16-2-'21 and 22-9-'21 and M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, Part V, Chap. XX.

‡‡ *Harijan*, 3-7-'37.

command a particular wage, their labour must be worthy and fit to receive that wage anywhere else. Strikers therefore cannot expect to be idlers and succeed.§

The Textile Labour Association in Ahmbedabad started in 1937 an experiment at the instance of Gandhiji which consisted in training its members to a supplementary occupation in addition to their principal occupation in the mills so that in the event of a lock-out, strike or loss of employment, they would always have something to fall back upon, instead of being faced with the prospect of starvation.* The experiment has yielded some fruitful results.

When a Strike is No Remedy :—“ A strike is no remedy when there is enough other labour to replace strikers. In that case, in the event of unjust treatment and inadequate wages or the like, resignation is the remedy.” †

We shall examine the application of this remedy in connection with strikes by scavengers and the mutiny by Naval ratings in Bombay in 1946.

The Measure of Success :—“ Successful strikes have taken place even when all the above conditions have not been fulfilled, but that merely proves that the employers were weak and had a guilty conscience. We often make terrible mistakes by copying bad examples. The safest thing is not to copy examples of which we have rarely complete knowledge, but to follow the conditions which we know and recognize to be essential for success.” ‡

Sympathetic Strikes :—Very often we find workers going on strike in sympathy with woes of the strikers in some other industry. In Gandhiji's opinion the labourers and the artisans of India had not arrived at that degree of national consciousness which was necessary for successful, sympathetic strikes. The fault was that of the political leaders. They had not studied the wants and aspirations of these classes nor taken the trouble of informing them of the political situation. They had believed that only those who had passed through high schools and colleges were fit

§ *Harijan*, 2-6-'46 and *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, G. A. Natesan & Co., (4th Edition), p. 1045.

* *Harijan*, 3-7-'37.

† *Young India*, 16-2-'21.

‡ *Ibid*.

to participate in national work. It was hardly therefore proper to expect the labouring and the artisan class all of a sudden to appreciate and sacrifice themselves for interests outside their own. They should not therefore be exploited for political or any other ends.§ These words were penned some 35 years ago when politics was the pastime of the leisured classes. Gandhiji changed the whole complexion of the political movement in the country and labour has awakened from its deep slumber. Yet, it cannot be said that they have reached a stage where they understand the full implication of their own acts and their consequences.

Any premature precipitation of sympathetic strike must result in infinite harm to the cause of labour.* Sympathetic strikes must be taboo until it is conclusively proved that the affected men have exhausted all the legitimate means at their disposal in order to secure justice from obdurate and unsympathetic authorities.† Such strikes have to be strikes for self-purification. The merit of a sympathetic strike lies in the inconvenience and loss suffered by the sympathizers.‡

“A pacific strike must be limited to those who are labouring under the grievance to be redressed. Thus if the match-manufacturers, say, of Timbuctoo, who are quite satisfied with their lot, strike out of sympathy for its mill-hands who are getting starvation wages, the match-manufacturers’ strike would be a species of violence. They may and should help in a most effective manner by withdrawing their custom from the mill-owners of Timbuctoo without laying themselves open to the charge of violence. But it is possible to conceive occasions when those who are not directly suffering may be under an obligation to cease work. Thus, if in the instance imagined, the masters in the match-factory combine with the mill-owners of Timbuctoo, it will clearly be the duty of the workers in the match-factory to make common cause with the mill-hands....In the last resort every case has to be judged on its own merits. Violence is a subtle force. It is not easy

§ *Young India*, 22-9-'21.

* *Ibid.*

† *Harijan*, 11-8-'46.

‡ *Young India*, 22-9-'21.

always to detect its presence though you may feel it all the same." §

The Best Service to Labour:—The best service we can render to labour is to teach them self-help, to give them an idea of their own duties and rights, and put them in a position to secure redress of their own just grievances. Then gradually they will acquire the capacity for political, national or humanitarian service.*

Exploitation of Labour for Political Ends:—“The labour world in India, as elsewhere, is at the mercy of those who set up as advisers and guides. The latter are not always scrupulous and not always wise even when they are scrupulous. The labourers are dissatisfied with their lot. They have every reason for dissatisfaction. They are being taught, and justly, to regard themselves as being chiefly instrumental in enriching their employers. And so it requires little effort to make them lay down their tools. The political situation too is beginning to affect the labourers of India. And there are not wanting labour leaders who consider that strikes may be engineered for political purposes.” †

In Gandhiji's opinion it would be a most serious mistake to make use of labour strikes for such purposes. He did not deny that such strikes could serve political ends, but they did not fall within the plan of non-violent non-co-operation. It did not require much effort of the intellect to perceive that it was a most dangerous thing to make political use of labour until labourers understand the political condition of the country and are prepared to work for the common good. This was hardly to be expected of them all of a sudden and until they had bettered their own condition so as to enable them to keep body and soul together in a decent manner. The greatest political contribution, therefore, that labourers could make was to improve their own condition, to become better informed, to insist on their rights and even to demand proper use by their employers, of the manufactures in which they have had such an important hand. As the labourers became more organized and think of the country as well as themselves

§ *Young India*, 18-11-'26.

* *Young India*, 22-9-'21.

† *Young India*, 16-2-'21.

they would fight for a due adjustment of prices of manufactures to the making of which they contribute so much labour. A time must come and sooner the better when there would be an equitable proportion between dividends, wages and prices. The proper evolution, therefore, would be for the labourers to raise themselves to the status of part-proprietors. Strikes, therefore, could only take place for the direct betterment of the labourers' lot, and when they have acquired the spirit of patriotism, for the regulation of the prices of their manufactures.‡

Strikes for economic betterment should never have a political end as an ulterior motive. Such a mixture never advances the political end and generally brings trouble upon strikers. Such strikes can only take place when every other legitimate means has been adopted and failed.§

The Place of Political Strikes in Non-violent Action :—

Political strikes must be treated on their own merits and must never be mixed with or related to economic strikes. Political strikes have a definite place in non-violent action. They are never taken up haphazard. They must be open, never led by *goondaism*. They are calculated never to lead to violence.* A political strike, the object of which is to paralyse the government is an extreme political step open only to a body which is truly representative of the people and not even to unions however powerful they may be.†

Mutiny of Naval Ratings in Bombay :— An attempt to paralyse the Government was made by the Naval ratings in Bombay in 1946, with the covert aim of ventilating their dissatisfaction with the discrimination made by the British authorities against the Indian personnel but under the public protestation of fighting the battle of freedom. Gandhiji condemned the mutiny as a thoughtless violent action. He did not want it to be said of India of the Congress that it spoke to the whole world of winning

‡ *Young India*, 16-2-'21 and 11-8-'21.

§ *Harijan*, 11-8-'46.

* *Ibid.*

† *Ibid.*

Swaraj through non-violent action and belied her word in action at a critical period in her life. He commended to the Indian members of the Navy the way of non-violent resistance which can be dignified, manly and wholly effective if it is corporate. For the individual it always is. Why should they continue to serve if service is humiliating for them or India, he asked. Action like this he called non-violent non-co-operation ‡

The first principle of non-violent action as propounded in the Congress resolution of 1920 at its special session in Calcutta under the late Lala Lajpatrai is that of non-co-operation with everything humiliating. It must be remembered that the R.I.N. was founded not for the benefit of the ruled. The men went with their eyes open. Discrimination stared one in the face. It could not be avoided if one entered the service which was frankly organized to keep India under subjection. One might, one ought to, try to mend the conditions. That was possible only up to a point. That could not be achieved through mutiny. Mutiny might conceivably succeed. But the success could only avail the mutineers and their kin, not the whole of India. And the lesson would be a bad inheritance. Discipline would be at least as necessary under Swaraj as it was then. India under successful mutineers would be cut up into warring factions exhausted by internecine warfare.§ His advice to them therefore was to give up manfully their jobs. Thereby they would at least save their honour and dignity.

Strike of Scavengers :— His advice to the scavengers was also in the same strain. A *bhangi* may not give up his work even for a day.* There are certain matters in which strikes would be wrong. Sweepers' grievances come in this category. Gandhiji's objection to strikes by sweepers dated back to about 1897 when he was in Durban. A general strike was mooted there and the question arose as to whether scavengers should join it. His vote was

‡ *Harijan*, 3-3-'46.

§ *Harijan*, 10-3-'46.

* *Harijan*, 21-4-'46.

registered against the proposal. Just as man cannot live without air so too he cannot exist for long if his home and surroundings are not clean. One or the other epidemic is bound to break out especially when modern drainage is put out of action.†

Does that mean that the *bhangī* is to continue his service on starvation wages, living in dirt and squalor? In such cases the proper remedy is not a strike but a notice to the public in general and the employing corporation in particular that the *bhangī* must give up the sweeping service which consigns those reserved for that service to a life of starvation and all it means. There is a wide distinction between a strike and an entire discontinuation (not suspension) of service. A strike is a temporary measure in expectation of relief. Discontinuance is giving up of a particular job because there is no expectation of relief. Proper discontinuance presupposes fair notice on the one hand and prospect of better wages and freedom from squalor and dirt on the other. This will wake up society from its disgraceful slumber, resulting in a proper scavenging of the outgrowth that has smothered public conscience. At a stroke the *bhangīs* will raise scavenging to a fine art and give it a status it should have had long ago.‡

Strikes in Public Utility Services :—Gandhiji also counselled against strikes in public utility services, for dislocation of these would dislocate public life. He was not the one to tell the employees of these services to slave away under any conditions. But there were other and unobjectionable ways of getting redress.§

A Non-violent Strike :—Strikes have today become a universal plague. In India they have a special significance. We are living under an unnatural condition. As soon as the lid is removed and there is a crevice letting in the fresh air

† *Harijan*, 21-4-'46.

‡ *Harijan*, 26-3-'46.

§ *Harijan*, 10-8-'47.

of freedom, there will be an increasing number of strikes. The fundamental reason for this spreading strike fever is that life here as elsewhere is today uprooted from its basis, the basis of religion and what an English writer has called 'cash nexus' has taken its place and that is a precarious bond. But even when the religious basis is there, there will be strikes because it is scarcely conceivable that religion will have become for all the basis of life. So there will be attempts at exploitation on the one hand, and strikes on the other. But these strikes will then be of a purely non-violent character. Such strikes never do harm to anyone.*

Abuse of Strikes :— Strikes are an inherent right of the workmen for the purpose of securing justice.† Strikes and *hartals* are wonderful things no doubt, but it is not difficult to abuse them. Workmen ought to organize themselves into strong labour unions, and on no account should they strike work without the consent of those unions. Strikes should not be risked without previous negotiations with the employers.‡ All the resources to reach a settlement must be exhausted.§ No doubt if the employers close the doors against arbitration the workers may have to resort to a strike.**

When Strikes Are a Crime :— Strikes must be considered a crime immediately the capitalists accept the principle of arbitration.†† An impartial tribunal for settling disputes should always be accepted. Refusal is a sign of weakness. Coercion cannot but result in the end in chaos.‡‡ Demands should be referred to arbitration. Even if they are reasonable, they cannot be made a subject of strike before the process of arbitration has been gone through.

* *Harijan*, 22-9-'46.

† *Young India*, 28-4-'20.

‡ *Young India*, 11-2-'20.

§ *Harijan*, 7-11-'36.

** *Ibid.*

†† *Young India*, 28-4-'20.

‡‡ *Harijan*, 12-5-'46.

Any lightning strike is a form of dictation which is dangerous.§

Unjustified Strikes :— Obviously there should be no strike which is not justifiable on merit. No unjust strike should succeed. All public sympathy must be withheld from such strikes.* When a strike is indefensible on merits the public should unequivocally condemn it. The natural result would be that the men on strike would go back to work.†

Why Arbitration ? :— As a rule the matter does not come before the public when there is accepted arbitration or adjudication. In the absence of it the public has no means of judging the merits of a strike, unless it is backed by impartial persons enjoying public confidence. Interested men cannot judge the merits of their own case. Hence, there must be an arbitration accepted by the parties or a judicial adjudication.‡

Strikes ought to be impossible when there is perfect understanding between capital and labour, mutual respect and recognition of equality.§§ As labour becomes organized strikes must be few and far between.** And as the mental and collective development of organized labour progresses they will find that the principle of arbitration replaces the principle of strikes.††

“ Since differences there would be sometimes between employers and employees even in the best regulated concerns, why should there not be a system of arbitration between the parties so that they will readily carry out in perfect good faith awards of arbitrators ? ” ‡‡

§ *Harijan*, 7-2-'46.

* *Harijan*, 11-8-'46.

† *Harijan*, 31-3-'46.

‡ *Harijan*, 11-8-'46.

§§ *Harijan*, 31-3-'46.

** *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, G. A. Natesan & Co., (4th Edition), p. 1045.

†† *Ibid*.

‡‡ *Harijan*, 31-3-'46.

Award Must Be Binding on Parties :— The strongest combination of employers and labour must accept the principle of arbitration if they are ever to live in peace.§ Once the principle of arbitration is accepted the decision of the arbitrators or the umpire must be accepted by both the parties alike, whether they like it or not.*

Some Categorical Propositions :— Today capital is afraid of labour and labour scowls at capital. Gandhiji wanted to replace that relationship by one of mutual trust and respect.† Arbitration can resolve disputes after they have arisen but cannot prevent them. To achieve that there are certain categorical propositions which must be complied with :

“(1) Wages should not be pushed below the irreducible minimum. There should be common understanding as to what should be included in determination of such a wage.

“(2) It is vital to the wellbeing of the industry that the workmen should be regarded as equals with the shareholders and that they have, therefore, every right to possess an accurate knowledge of the transactions of the mills. If labourers are co-equal owners, their organization should have the same access to the transactions of the mills as the shareholders. Indeed there can be no confidence on the part of labour if material information is withheld from it.

“(3) There should be a register of all available mill-hands acceptable to both the parties and the custom of taking labour through any agency other than the representative union should be stopped. This maxim admits of no weakening. If the labour union is organized as a desirable organization as much as the mill-owners’, and is not merely tolerated as a necessary evil, it follows that there should be an agreed register of available hands and that the mill-owners should not accept or engage any person outside the labour union.

“(4) Labour should have the same status and dignity as capital.‡

“The above points are essential but they are by no means exhaustive.”

§ *Young India*, 19-9-'29.

* *Young India*, 11-2-'20.

† *Young India*, 20-8-'25.

‡ *Harijan*, 13-2-'37.

Plain Speaking to Labour :— Gandhiji also did some plain speaking to labour :

“If you were strong in number, even if you were a million, you would not be able to run a mill. You lack talent to run it. You have not acquired the capacity to run a mill even after twenty years of organized work, nor are you likely to acquire that capacity within the next twenty years. If you think you have you do not need a leader to lead you.

“I do wish you may acquire that capacity some day. It is certainly possible for you individually so to train yourselves as to run a mill. In that case the rest of you will be as much slaves as you are today. What I mean is that you as a body could not own a mill in a given number of years.*

“If instead of insisting on rights everyone did his duty, there will immediately be the rule of order established among mankind. There is no such thing as the divine right of kings to rule and the humble duty of the *ryots* to pay respectful obedience to their masters. Whilst it is true that these hereditary inequalities must go as being injurious to the wellbeing of society, the unabashed assertion of rights of the hitherto down-trodden millions is equally injurious, if not more so to the same wellbeing. The latter behaviour is probably calculated to injure the millions rather than the few claimants of divine or other rights. They could but die a brave or cowardly death, but those few dead would not bring in the orderly life of blissful contentment.” †

If the capitalists are apt to be proud of their wealth, the working men are apt to be proud of their numerical strength. They are liable to be swayed and intoxicated by the same passion as the capitalists.‡

“It is therefore necessary to understand the correlation of rights and duties....Rights that do not flow directly from duty well performed are not worth having. They will be usurpations sooner discarded the better....Force that performance of duty naturally generates is the non-violent and invincible force that Satyagraha brings into being.” §

When people adopt non-violence as a principle of conduct class war becomes an impossibility. The experiment in that direction was tried at Ahmedabad which had

* *Harijan*, 7-11-'36.

† *Harijan*, 6-7-'47.

‡ *Young India*, 26-3-'31.

§ *Harijan*, 6-7-'47.

yielded most satisfactory results.* The organization of labour that Gandhiji undertook in South Africa, Champaran and Ahmedabad was in no spirit of hostility to the capitalist. The resistance in each case and to the extent it was thought necessary was wholly successful.†

Labour may have to fight the mill-owners, but they should do so with the same love and regard and reluctance as they would fight their blood-relations, their own kith and kin. The non-violent method seeks not to destroy the capitalist for capital is not regarded as the enemy of labour. It must try for his conversion. No doubt, capitalism and all its evils must be destroyed. In this process it must invite the co-operation of the capitalist, in full faith, that co-ordination of capital and labour is perfectly possible, to build the prosperity of industry broad-based on the harmony of all the varying elements.

Conclusion

In the foregoing pages I have attempted to present an epitome of Gandhiji's teachings addressed to a society whose life has been revolutionized by the machine and scientific inventions and discoveries. As far as possible, I have used Gandhiji's own words as a vehicle of thought. I have done nothing more than to select and string together his gems of thoughts, which were scattered in different nooks and corners.

Gandhiji has left an invaluable legacy to the nation. He has shown the path of salvation for India and the humanity. He himself set out on that journey and carried us a part of the way with him. He is no longer with us. We miss his sure and unfailing touch and grope in the dark. In the midst of darkness that surrounds us it will not do to lose our nerve. That will spell our ruin. Nor can we merely stumble blindly.

What is required at this juncture is to illumine our labours with knowledge. Whether we approach the ques-

* *Young India*, 26-3-'31.

† *Young India*, 17-3-'27.

tion of Khadi or the use of electricity or any other problem, we must constantly think out ways and means of making our activity dynamic. Mere affirmation of what Gandhiji said is not enough.

“A scientific mind will not be satisfied with having things scientific just on faith. He will insist on finding a basis in reason. Faith becomes lame when it ventures into matters pertaining to reason. Its field begins where reason’s ends. Conclusions based on faith are unshakable whereas those based on reason are liable to be unstable and vulnerable to superior logic. To state the limitation of science is not to belittle it. We cannot do without either — each in its own place.” ‡

So, with both scientific knowledge and faith as our guides we must carry forward the torch of progress that was lighted by Gandhiji.

Gandhiji was aware during his lifetime to the danger of his teachings deteriorating into a dogma in the hands of his followers. So he cautioned them against developing a wooden approach to things in the following words :

“Then there is another and a much grave risk. There is the danger of your Sangh § deteriorating into a sect. Whenever there is any difficulty you will turn to my writings in *Young India* and *Harijan*, and swear by them. As a matter of fact my writings should be cremated with my body. What I have done will endure, not what I have said and written. I have often said recently that even if all our scriptures were to perish, that one *mantra* of Ishopanishad was enough to declare the essence of Hinduism, but even that one verse will be of no avail if there is no one to live it. Even so, what I have said and written is useful only to the extent that it has helped you to assimilate the great principles of truth and non-violence. If you have not assimilated them, my writings will be of no use to you. I say this to you as a Satyagrahi meaning every word of it....I should not care to know what happens after I am gone, but I wish that your organization may never be a stagnant pool but an ever-growing tree. Forget me, therefore; my name is an unnecessary adjunct to the name of the Sangh; cleave not to my name, but cleave to the principles, measure every one of your activities by that standard and face fearlessly every problem that arises.” *

‡ *Harijan*, 31-3-46.

§ Gandhi Seva Sangh.

* D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. IV, p. 188.

In face of this, to stick to the mere letter of what Gandhiji said is to decry the spirit of it. To forget the heritage is a blasphemy.

It is heartening to notice that burning problems of the day are being approached in that spirit. For example, the economics of an improved and a more efficient type of spinning wheel is being tested and worked out on a national scale. With the possibility in sight in the very near future of the completion of multi-purpose hydro-electric projects, the use of electricity in cottage industries will no longer remain an academic question. The All-India Khadi and Village Industries Board is examining this question in all its aspects. The *Khadi-Gramodyog* issue of December 1954 which is devoted entirely to the first All-India Khadi-Gramodyog Workers' Conference held in Poona in November 1954, contains much useful information on such and like questions.

Having won our political freedom, we have now set ourselves to the task of achieving our economic emancipation. To some, economic freedom connotes merely technological advancement. The touchstone of all economic progress is, however, the promotion of human welfare. To the extent we are able to translate our economic policies in terms of the wellbeing of the masses in this country, our progress will be real. The teachings of Gandhiji can be likened to the beaconing star. It will be unwise to ignore it. We can do so only at our own peril. And lest it is forgotten, it is good to remember that without moral freedom, political and economic freedom have no meaning.

Bombay, 27th June 1956

V. B. Kher

**ECONOMIC AND INDUSTRIAL
LIFE AND RELATIONS**

Volume I

SECTION ONE : SWARAJ, SOCIALISM AND COMMUNISM

1

INDIAN HOME RULE

(In 1909 Gandhiji wrote on board S. S. Kildonan, during his return voyage to South Africa from England a book called *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*.* It is a severe condemnation of "modern civilization". It is written in a dialogue form and is a faithful record of the conversation Gandhiji had with his co-workers. It is divided into twenty chapters dealing with Swaraj, civilization, lawyers, doctors, machinery, education, passive resistance and other matters. The contents of *Hind Swaraj* were summarized by Gandhiji in a letter to a friend in India. The summary is reproduced below.)

1. There is no impassable barrier between East and West.

2. There is no such thing as Western or European civilization, but there is a modern civilization which is purely material.

3. The people of Europe, before they were touched by modern civilization, had much in common with the people of the East, anyhow the people of India; and even today Europeans who are not touched by modern civilization, are far better able to mix with Indians than the offspring of that civilization.

4. It is not the British who are ruling India, but it is modern civilization, through its railways, telegraph, telephone, and almost every invention which has been claimed to be a triumph of civilization.

5. Bombay, Calcutta and the other chief cities of India are the real plague-spots.

6. If British rule were replaced tomorrow by Indian rule based on modern methods, India would be no better, except that she would be able to retain some of the money

* Published by the Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad-14, price 50 nP., postage etc. 19 nP.

that is drained away to England; but then India would only become a second or fifth nation of Europe or America.

7. East and West can really meet when the West has thrown overboard modern civilization, almost in its entirety. They can also seemingly meet when East had also adopted modern civilization, but that meeting would be an armed truce, even as it is between, say, Germany and England, both of which nations are living in the Hall of Death in order to avoid being devoured, the one by the other.

8. It is simply impertinence for any man or any body of men to begin or to contemplate reform of the whole world. To attempt to do so by means of highly artificial and speedy locomotion, is to attempt the impossible.

9. Increase of material comforts, it may be generally laid down, does not in any way whatsoever conduce to moral growth.

10. Medical science is the concentrated essence of black magic. Quackery is infinitely preferable to what passes for high medical skill as such.

11. Hospitals are the instruments that the Devil has been using for his own purpose, in order to keep his hold on his kingdom. They perpetuate vice, misery and degradation and real slavery. I was entirely off the track when I considered that I should receive a medical training. It would be sinful for me in any way whatsoever to take part in the abominations that go in the hospitals. If there were no hospitals for venereal diseases, or even for consumptives, we should have less consumption and less sexual vice amongst us.

12. India's salvation consists in unlearning what she has learnt during the past fifty years or so. The railways, telegraphs, hospitals, lawyers, doctors, and such like have all to go, and the so-called upper classes have to learn to live consciously and religiously and deliberately the simple life of a peasant knowing it to be a life giving true happiness.

13. India should wear no machine-made clothing whether it comes out of European or Indian mills.

14. England can help India to do this and then she will have justified her hold on India. There seems to be many in England today who think likewise.

15. There was true wisdom in the sages of old having so regulated society as to limit the material conditions of the people : the rude plough of perhaps five thousand years ago is the plough of the husbandman today. Therein lies salvation. People live long under such conditions, in comparative peace much greater than Europe has enjoyed after having taken up modern activity, and I feel that every enlightened man, certainly every Englishman, may, if he chooses, learn this truth and act according to it.

It is the true spirit of passive resistance that has brought me to the above almost definite conclusions. As a passive resister, I am unconcerned whether such a gigantic reformation — shall I call it — can be brought about among people who find their satisfaction from the present mad rush. If I realize the truth of it, I should rejoice in following it, and, therefore, I could not wait until the whole body of people had commenced. All of us who think likewise have to take the necessary step, and the rest, if we are in the right, must follow. The theory is there ; our practice will have to approach it as much as possible. Living in the midst of the rush, we may not be able to shake ourselves free from all taint. Every time I get into a railway car or use a motor-bus, I know that I am doing violence to my sense of what is right. I do not fear the logical result of that basis. The visiting of England is bad, and any communication between South Africa and India by means of ocean greyhounds is also bad and so on. You and I can, and may outgrow these things in our present bodies, but the chief thing is to put our theory right. You will be seeing there all sorts and conditions of men. I, therefore, feel that I should no longer withhold from you what I call the progressive step I have taken mentally. If you agree with me, then it will be your duty to tell the revolutionaries and

everybody else that the freedom they want, or they think they want, is not to be obtained by killing people or doing violence but by setting themselves right and by becoming and remaining truly Indian. Then the British rulers will be servants and no masters. They will be trustees, and not tyrants, and they will live in perfect peace with the whole of the inhabitants of India. The future, therefore, lies not with the British race, but with the Indians themselves, and if they have sufficient self-abnegation and abstemiousness, they can make themselves free this very moment, and when we have arrived in India at the simplicity which is still ours largely and which was ours entirely until a few years ago, it will still be possible for the best Indians and the best Europeans to see one another throughout the length and breadth of India and act as the leaven. When there was no rapid locomotion, teachers and preachers went on foot from one end of the country to the other, braving all dangers, not for recouping their health — though all that followed from their tramps — but for the sake of humanity. Then were Benares and other places of pilgrimage, the holy cities, whereas today they are an abomination.

Mahatma by G. D. Tendulkar, Vol. I, p. 129.

2

INDIA UNDER SWARAJ

(Originally appeared under the heading "Misleading")

Readers have besieged me with leaflets which the Propaganda Committee of W.I.N.* Liberal Association has been distributing broadcast.

Leaflet No. 6 contains the following :

"What would India be like when Gandhi-Raj comes ?

No railways. No hospitals. No machinery.

No army and navy will be wanted, because Gandhi will assure other nations that India would not interfere with them and so they will not interfere with India !

* Western India National.

No laws necessary, no courts necessary because every one will be law unto himself. Everybody will be free to do what he likes. It will be a very easy life because everybody will have to go about in a *khaddar lungoti* and sleep in the open."

I cannot say this is an exaggeration. It is a clever caricature permissible in Western warfare. It is only suggestively false. Let me say what I mean. In the first instance, India is not striving to establish "Gandhi-Raj". It is in dead earnest to establish Swaraj and would gladly and legitimately sacrifice Gandhi for the sake of winning Swaraj. "Gandhi-Raj" is an ideal condition and in that condition all the five negatives will represent a true picture, but under Swaraj nobody ever dreams, certainly I do not dream, of no railways, no hospitals, no machinery, no army and navy, no laws and law courts. On the contrary, there will be railways, only they will not be intended for the military or the economic exploitation of India, but they will be used for promoting internal trade and will make the lives of third class passengers fairly comfortable. There will be some return for the fares the third class public pay. Nobody anticipates complete absence of disease during Swaraj; there will therefore certainly be hospitals, but one hopes that the hospitals will then be intended more for those who suffer from accidents than from self-indulgence. Machinery there certainly will be in the shape of the spinning wheel, which is after all a delicate piece of machinery, but I have no doubt that several factories will grow up in India under Swaraj intended for the benefit of the people, not as now for draining the masses dry. I do not know of the navy but I do know that the army of India of the future will not consist of hirelings to be utilized for keeping India under subjection and for depriving other nations of their liberty, but it would be largely cut down, will consist largely of volunteers and will be utilized for policing India. There will be laws and law courts under Swaraj, but they will be custodians of the people's liberty, not, as they now are, instruments in the hands of a bureaucracy which has emasculated and is intent upon further emasculating a whole nation. Lastly, whilst it will be

optional for anybody who chooses to go about in a *lungoti* and sleep in the open, let me hope that it will not be necessary as it is today for millions to go about with a dirty rag which serves for a *lungoti* for want of the means to buy sufficient clothing, and to rest their weary and starved bodies in the open for want of a roof. It is not right therefore to tear some ideas expressed in *Hind Swaraj* from their proper setting, caricature them and put them before the public as if I was preaching these ideas for anybody's acceptance.

Young India, 9-3-'22, p. 145.

3

PRACTICAL DEFINITION OF SWARAJ

(From "An Appeal to the Nation")

Independence is a word hallowed by centuries of usage and therefore it is possible to raise round it a large body of opinion but no one would hazard a definition of it that would suit the whole of that body. I suggest, therefore, that there is no substitute for Swaraj and the only universal definition to give it is 'that status of India which her people desire at a given moment'.

If I were asked what India desires at the present moment, I should say I do not know. I could only say I would have her to desire truthful relations between Hindus and Musalmans, bread for the masses and removal of untouchability. That is how I would define Swaraj at the present moment. I give that definition because I claim to be a practical man. I know that we want political independence of England. It will not be attained without the three things mentioned by me not even if we had arms and we knew how to use them.

Young India, 17-7-'24, p. 236.

THE NATIONAL DEMAND

(Speech before the Federal Structure Sub-Committee of the Round Table Conference at London, on September 15, 1931)

I must confess at the outset that I am not a little embarrassed in having to state before you the position of the Indian National Congress. I would like to say that I have come to London to attend this Sub-Committee as also the Round Table Conference, when the proper time comes, absolutely in the spirit of co-operation and to strive to my utmost to find points of agreement. I would like also to give this assurance to His Majesty's Government that at no stage is it, or will it be, my desire to embarrass authority ; and I would like to give the same assurance to my colleagues here, that however much we may differ about our view-points, I shall not obstruct them in any shape or form. Therefore my position here depends entirely upon your goodwill as also the goodwill of His Majesty's Government. If at any time I found that I could not be of any useful service to the Conference, I would not hesitate to withdraw myself from it. I can also say to those who are responsible for the management of this Committee and the Conference that they have only to give a sign and I should have no hesitation in withdrawing.

I am obliged to make these remarks because I know that there are fundamental differences of opinion between the Government and the Congress, and it is possible that there are vital differences between my colleagues and myself. There is also a limitation under which I shall be working. I am but a poor humble agent acting on behalf of the Indian National Congress ; and it might be as well to remind ourselves of what the Congress stands for and what it is. You will then extend your sympathy to me, because I know that the burden that rests upon my shoulders is really very great.

What the Congress Is

The Congress is, if I am not mistaken, the oldest political organization we have in India. It has had nearly 50 years of life during which period it has, without any interruption, held its annual session. It is what it means — national. It represents no particular community, no particular class, no particular interest. It claims to represent all Indian interests and all classes. It is a matter of the greatest pleasure to me to state that it was first conceived in an English brain. Allan Octavius Hume we knew as the father of the Congress. It was nursed by two great Parsis : Sir Pherozeshah Mehta and Dadabhai Naoroji, whom all India delighted to recognize as its Grand Old Man. From the very commencement the Congress had Musalmans, Christians, Anglo-Indians, I might say all religions, sects, and communities represented upon it more or less fully. The late Badruddin Tyabji identified himself with the Congress. We have had Musalmans and Parsis as presidents of the Congress. I can recall at least one Indian Christian president at the present moment : W. C. Bonnerji. Kalicharan Bannerji than whom I have not had the privilege of knowing a purer Indian was also thoroughly identified with the Congress. I miss, as I have no doubt all of you miss, the presence in our midst of Mr. K. T. Paul. Although he never officially belonged to the Congress, he was a nationalist to the full and a sympathizer of the Congress.

As you know, late Maulana Muhammed Ali, whose presence also we miss today, was a president of the Congress, and at present we have four Musalmans as members of the Working Committee which consists of 15 members. We have had women as our presidents. Dr. Annie Besant was the first, and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu followed. We have her as a member of the Working Committee also ; and so, if we have no distinctions of class or creed, we have no distinctions of sex either.

The Congress has, from its very commencement taken up the cause of the so-called untouchables. There was a time

when the Congress had at every annual session as its adjunct the Social Conference, to which the late Ranade had dedicated his energies among his many activities. Headed by him, you will find in the programme of the Social Conference reform in connection with the untouchables taking a prominent place. But in 1920 the Congress took a large step and brought the question of removal of untouchability as a plank on the political platform, made it an important item of the political programme. Just as the Congress considered Hindu-Muslim unity, thereby meaning unity amongst the people following all the great religions to be indispensable for the attainment of Swaraj, so also did the Congress consider the removal of untouchability as an indispensable condition for the attainment of full freedom.

The position the Congress took up in 1920 remains intact today, and so you will see that the Congress has attempted from its very beginning to be what it has described itself to be, namely, national in every sense of the term.

If Your Highnesses will permit me to say it in the very early stages, the Congress took up your cause also. Let me remind this Committee that it was the Grand Old Man of India who sponsored the cause of Kashmir and Mysore, and these two great Houses, I venture in all humility to submit, owe not a little to the efforts of Dadabhai Naoroji and the Congress. Even now the Congress has endeavoured to serve the Princes of India by refraining from any interference in their domestic and internal affairs.

I hope that this brief introduction that I thought fit to give, will serve to enable the Sub-Committee and those who are interested in the claims of the Congress to understand that it has endeavoured to deserve the claim that it has made. It has failed, I know, often to live up to the claim, but I venture to submit that if you were to examine the history of the Congress, you would find that it has more often succeeded and progressively succeeded than failed. Above all, the Congress represents in its essence the dumb, semi-starved millions scattered over the length and

breadth of the land in its seven hundred thousand villages, no matter whether they come from what is called British India or what is called Indian India. Every interest which, in the opinion of the Congress, is worthy of protection, has to subserve the interests of these dumb millions. You do find now and again an apparent clash between several interests. If there is a genuine and real clash, I have no hesitation in saying on behalf of the Congress that the Congress will sacrifice every interest for the sake of the interests of these dumb millions. It is therefore essentially a peasant organization or it is becoming so progressively. You and even the Indian members of the Sub-Committee will perhaps be astonished to find that today the Congress through its organization, the All-India Spinners' Association, is finding work for nearly 50,000 women in nearly 2,000 villages and these women are possibly 50 per cent Musalman women. Thousands of them belong to the so-called untouchable classes. We have thus in this constructive manner penetrated these villages and the effort is being made to cover every one of the 7,00,000 villages. It is a superhuman task but if human effort can do so, you will presently find Congress covering all of these villages and bringing to them the message of the spinning wheel.

The Congress Demand

This being the representative character of the Congress, you will not be astonished when I read to you the Congress mandate. I hope that it may not jar upon you. You may consider that the Congress is making a claim which is wholly untenable. Such as it is, I am here to put forth that claim on behalf of the Congress in the gentlest manner possible but also in the firmest manner possible. I have come here to prosecute that claim with all the faith and energy that I can command. If you can convince me to the contrary and show that the claim is inimical to the interests of these dumb millions, I shall revise my opinion. I am open to conviction, but even so I should have to ask my principals to consent to that revision before I could usefully act as the agent of the Congress. At this stage I

propose to read to you this mandate so that you can understand clearly the limitations imposed upon me.

This was a resolution passed at the Karachi Session of the Indian National Congress :

This Congress, having considered the provisional settlement between the Working Committee and the Government of India, endorses it and desires to make it clear that the Congress goal of *Purna Swaraj*, meaning complete independence, remains intact. In the event of a way remaining otherwise open to the Congress to be represented at any Conference with the representatives of the British Government, the Congress delegation will work for this goal and in particular so as to give the nation control over the army, external affairs, finance, fiscal and economic policy and to have a scrutiny by an impartial tribunal of the financial transactions of the British Government in India, to examine and assess the obligations to be undertaken by India or England and the right for either party to end the partnership at will provided, however, that the Congress delegation will be free to accept such adjustments as may be demonstrably necessary in the interests of India.

Then follows the appointment. I have in the light of this mandate endeavoured to study as carefully as I was capable of studying the provisional conclusions arrived at by the several Sub-Committees appointed by the Round Table Conference. I have also carefully studied the Prime Minister's Statement giving the considered policy of His Majesty's Government. I speak subject to correction, but so far as I have been able to understand this document falls short of what is aimed at and claimed by the Congress. True, I have the liberty to accept such adjustments as may be demonstrably in the interests of India, but they have all to be consistent with the fundamentals stated in this mandate.

I remind myself at this stage of the terms of what is to me a sacred settlement—the settlement arrived at Delhi between the Government of India and the Congress. In that settlement the Congress has accepted the principle of federation ; the principle that there should be responsibility at the Centre, and has accepted also the principle that there should be safeguards in so far as they may be necessary in the interests of India.

Equal Partnership

There was one phrase used yesterday, I forget by which delegate, but it struck me very forcibly. He said : " We do not want a merely political constitution." I do not know that he gave that expression the same meaning that it immediately bore to me ; but I immediately said to myself, this phrase has given me a good expression. It is true the Congress will not be, and personally speaking, I myself would never be, satisfied with a mere political constitution which, to read, would seem to give India all she can possibly politically desire but in reality would give her nothing. If we are intent upon complete independence it is not from any sense of arrogance, it is not because we want to parade before the universe that we have now severed all connection with the British people. Nothing of the kind. On the contrary you find in this mandate itself that the Congress contemplates a partnership ; the Congress contemplates a connection with the British people, but that connection should be such as can exist between two absolute equals. Time was when I prided myself on being, and being called, a British subject. I have ceased for many years to call myself a British subject : I would far rather be called a rebel than a subject ; but I have now aspired, I still aspire, to be a citizen not in the Empire but in a Commonwealth, in a partnership if possible ; if God wills it, an indissoluble partnership but not a partnership superimposed upon one nation by another. Hence you find here that the Congress claims that either party should have the right to sever this connection, to dissolve the partnership. It has got to be necessarily therefore of mutual benefit. May I say — it may be irrelevant to the consideration but not irrelevant to me — that as I have said elsewhere, I can quite understand responsible British statesmen today being wholly engrossed in domestic affairs in trying to make both ends meet. We could not expect them to do anything less, and I felt, even as I was sailing towards London, whether we, in the Sub-Committee at the present moment, would not be a drag upon the British ministers, whether we would

not be interlopers. And yet, I said to myself, it is possible that we might not be interlopers, it is possible that the British ministers themselves might consider the proceedings of the Round Table Conference to be of primary importance even in terms of their domestic affairs. Yes, India can be held by the sword. But what will conduce to the prosperity of Great Britain and the economic freedom of Great Britain ; an enslaved but a rebellious India, or an India, an esteemed partner with Britain to share her sorrows, to take part side by side with Britain in her misfortunes ?

My Dream

Yes, if need be, but at her own will, to fight side by side with Britain, not for the exploitation of a single race or a single human being on earth, but it may be conceivably for the good of the whole world. If I want freedom for my country, believe me, if I can possibly help it, I do not want that freedom in order that I, belonging to a nation which counts one-fifth of the human race, may exploit any other race upon earth, or any single individual. If I want that freedom for my country, I would not be deserving of that freedom if I did not cherish and treasure the equal right of every other race — weak or strong — to the same freedom. And so I said to myself, whilst I was nearing the shores of your beautiful Island that, perchance it might be possible for me to convince the British ministers that India as a valuable partner, not held by force but by the silken cord of love, an India of that character might be conceivably of real assistance to you in balancing your budget, not for one year but for many years. What cannot the two nations do — one a handful but brave, with a record for bravery perhaps unsurpassed, a nation noted for having fought slavery, a nation that has at least claimed times without number to protect the weak — and another a very ancient nation, counted in millions, with a glorious and ancient past, representing at the present moment two great cultures — the Islam and Hindu cultures — and if you will, also containing not a small but a very large Christian population,

and certainly absorbing the whole of the splendid Zoroastrian stock, in numbers almost beneath contempt, but in philanthropy and enterprise almost unequalled, certainly unsurpassed. We have got all these cultures concentrated in India, and supposing that God fires both Hindus and Musalmans represented here with a proper spirit so that they close ranks and come to an honourable understanding, take that nation and this nation together, I again ask myself and ask you whether with an India free, completely independent as Great Britain is, an honourable partnership between these two nations cannot be mutually beneficial; even in terms of the domestic affairs of this great nation. And so, in that dreamy hope I have approached the British Isles, and I shall still cherish that dream.

And when I have said this perhaps I have said all, and you will be able to dot the I's and cross the T's, not expecting me to fill in all the details and tell you what I mean by control over the army, what I mean by control over external affairs, finance, fiscal and economic policy, or even the financial transactions which a friend yesterday considered to be sacrosanct. I do not take that view. If there is a stock-taking between incoming and outgoing partners, their transactions are subject to audit and adjustment, and the Congress will not be guilty of any dishonourable conduct or crime in saying that the nation should understand what it is taking over and what it should not take over. This audit, this scrutiny, is asked for not merely in the interests of India; it is asked for in the interests of both. I am positive that the British people do not want to saddle upon India a single burden which it should not legitimately bear, and I am here to declare on behalf of the Congress that the Congress will never think of repudiating a single claim or a burden that it should justly discharge. If we are to live as an honourable nation worthy of commanding credit from the whole world, we will pay every farthing of legitimate debt with our blood.

I do not think I should take you any further through

the clauses of this mandate and analyse for you the meaning of these clauses as Congressmen give them. If it is God's will that I should continue to take part in these deliberations, as the deliberations proceed, I shall be able to explain the implications of these clauses. As the deliberations proceed, I would have my say in connection with the safeguards also. But, I think, I have said quite enough in having, with some elaboration and with your generous indulgence, Lord Chancellor, taken the time of this meeting. I had not intended really to take their time, but I felt that I could not possibly do justice to the cause I have come to expound to you, the Sub-Committee, and to the British Nation of which we the Indian delegation are at present the guests if I did not give you out of the whole of my heart my cherished wish even at this time. I would love to go away from the shores of the British Isles with the conviction that there was to be an honourable and equal partnership between Great Britain and India.

I cannot do anything more than say that it will be my fervent prayer during all the days that I live in your midst that this consummation may be reached. I thank you, Lord Chancellor, for the courtesy that you have extended to me in not stopping me although I have taken close upon forty-five minutes. I was not entitled to all that indulgence and I thank you once more.

Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi (4th Edition), G. A. Natesan & Co., p. 787.

INDEPENDENCE OF MY DREAM

(Originally appeared under the title "Independence")

Friends have repeatedly challenged me to define independence. At the risk of repetition, I must say that independence of my dream means *Ramarajya* i.e. the Kingdom of God on earth. I do not know what it will be like in heaven. I have no desire to know the distant scene. If the present is attractive enough, the future cannot be very unlike.

In concrete terms, then, the independence should be political, economic and moral.

'Political' necessarily means the removal of the control of the British army in every shape and form.

'Economic' means entire freedom from British capitalists and capital, as also their Indian counterpart. In other words, the humblest must feel equal to the tallest. This can take place only by capital or capitalists sharing their skill and capital with the lowliest and the least.

'Moral' means freedom from armed defence forces. My conception of *Ramarajya* excludes replacement of the British army by a national army of occupation. A country that is governed by even its national army can never be morally free and, therefore, its so-called weakest member can never rise to his full moral height.

Though Mr. Churchill is claimed to have won the war for the British, he has in his Aberdeen speech uttered words of wisdom from the standpoint of a radical non-violent reformer. He knows if any panoplied warrior knows, what havoc the two wars of our generation have wrought. In another column I reproduce the summary of his speech as reported in the public press. Only I must warn the public against the pessimistic note underlying the speech. Nothing will be found to have gone wrong if mankind recoils from the horrors of war. The bloodletting that men have undergone to the point of whiteness will

not have been in vain, if it has taught us that we must freely give our own blood in the place of taking other people's blood, be the cause ever so noble or ignoble.

If the Cabinet Mission 'delivers the goods', India will have to decide whether attempting to become a military power she would be content to become, at least for some years, a fifth-rate power in the world without a message in answer to the pessimism described above, or whether she will by further refining and continuing her non-violent policy prove herself worthy of being the first nation in the world using her hard-won freedom for the delivery of the earth from the burden which is crushing her in spite of the so-called victory.

Harijan, 5-5-'46, p. 116.

Press Summary of Mr. Churchill's Speech

The world is very ill. This is the time when hatred is rife in the world and when mighty branches of the human family, victors or vanquished, innocent or guilty, are plunged in bewilderment, distress or ruin. Two fearful wars in our lifetime have torn the heart out of its grace and culture.

Measureless injury has been done to much that the 19th century would have called 'Christian civilization', for all the leading nations have been racked by stresses which have blunted their sensibilities and have destroyed their agreeable modes of social intercourse.

Only science has rolled forward, whipped by the fierce winds of mortal war, and science has placed in the hands of men agencies of destruction far beyond any development of their commonsense or virtue.

In a word where over-production of food was formerly from time to time a problem, famine has laid its gaunt fingers upon the peoples of many lands and scarcity upon all.

The psychic energies of mankind have been exhausted by the tribulations through which they have passed and are still passing. It is not only bloodletting that has weakened and whitened us.

The vital springs of human inspiration are, for the moment, drained. There must be a period of recovery. Mankind cannot, in its present plight bear new shocks and quarrels without taking to altogether cruder and primordial forms.

Yet we do not know that the hatreds and confusion which are found will not confront us with even harder trial than those we have so narrowly and painfully survived.

In many countries, where even united efforts would fall short of what is needed, party strife and faction is fomented or machine-made and skeleton fanatics rave at each other about their rival ideologies.

All the while, the ordinary folk of every country show themselves kindly and brave and serviceable to their fellow men. Yet, they are driven against one another by forces and organizations and doctrines as wantonly and remorselessly as they ever were in the ages of absolute emperors and kings.

There never was a time when breathing space was more needed, a blessed convalescence, a truce of God and man.

Statesman, 29-4-'46

6

MY IDEA OF INDIAN INDEPENDENCE

(Originally appeared under the title "Independence")

Q : You have said in your article in the *Harijan* of July 15, under the caption "The Real Danger" that Congressmen in general certainly do not know the kind of independence they want. Would you kindly give them a broad but comprehensive picture of the Independent India of your own conception ?

A : I do not know, that I have not, from time to time, given my idea of Indian Independence. Since, however, this question is a part of a series, it is better to answer it even at the risk of repetition.

Independence of India should mean independence of the whole of India, including what is called India of the States and the other foreign Powers, French and Portuguese, who are there, I presume, by British sufferance. Independence must mean that of the people of India, not of those who are today ruling over them. The rulers should depend on the will of those who are under their heels. Thus, they have to be servants of the people, ready to do their will.

Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, every village will be a republic or *panchayat* having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. It will be trained and prepared to perish in the attempt to defend itself against any onslaught from without. Thus, ultimately, it is the individual who is the unit. This does not exclude dependence on and willing help from neighbours or from the world. It will be free and voluntary play of mutual forces. Such a society is necessarily highly cultured in which every man and woman knows what he or she wants and, what is more, knows that no one should want anything that others cannot have with equal labour.

This society must naturally be based on truth and non-violence which, in my opinion, are not possible without a living belief in God meaning a self-existent, all-knowing living Force which inheres every other force known to the world and which depends on none and which will live when all other forces may conceivably perish or cease to act. I am unable to account for my life without belief in this all-embracing living Light.

In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening, never-ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at

last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units.

Therefore, the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it. I may be taunted with the retort that this is all Utopian and, therefore, not worth a single thought. If Euclid's point, though incapable of being drawn by human agency, has an imperishable value, my picture has its own for mankind to live. Let India live for this true picture, though never realizable in its completeness. We must have a proper picture of what we want, before we can have something approaching it. If there is ever to be a republic of every village in India, then I claim verity for my picture in which the last is equal to the first or, in other words, no one is to be the first and none the last.

In this picture every religion has its full and equal place. We are all leaves of a majestic tree whose trunk cannot be shaken off its roots which are deep down in the bowels of the earth. The mightiest wind cannot move it.

In this there is no room for machines that would displace human labour and that would concentrate power in a few hands. Labour has its unique place in a cultured human family. Every machine that helps every individual has a place. But I must confess that I have never sat down to think out what that machine can be. I have thought of Singer's sewing machine. But even that is perfunctory. I do not need it to fill in my picture.

Harijan, 28-7-'46, p. 236.

PANCHAYAT RAJ

(From an open letter entitled "To the People of Gujarat")

If we would see our dream of *panchayat raj* i.e. true democracy realized, we would regard the humblest and lowest Indian as being equally the ruler of India with the tallest in the land. This presupposes that all are pure or will become pure if they are not. And purity must go hand-in-hand with wisdom. No one would then harbour any distinction between community and community, caste and outcaste. Everybody would regard all as equal with oneself and hold them together in the silken net of love. No one would regard another as untouchable. We would hold as equal the toiling labourer and the rich capitalist. Everybody would know how to earn an honest living by the sweat of one's brow and make no distinction between intellectual and physical labour. To hasten this consummation, we would voluntarily turn ourselves into scavengers. No one who has wisdom will ever touch opium, liquor or any intoxicants. Everybody would observe Swadeshi as the rule of life and regard every woman, not being his wife, as his mother, sister or daughter according to her age, never lust after her in his heart. He would be ready to lay down his life when occasion demands it, never want to take another's life. If he is a Sikh in terms of the commandment of the Gurus he would have the heroic courage to stand single-handed and alone — without yielding an inch of ground — against the "one lakh and a quarter" enjoined by them. Needless to say, such a son of India will not want to be told what his duty in the present hour is.

Harijan, 18-1-'48, p. 517.

VILLAGE SWARAJ

(From "Question Box")

Q : In view of the situation that may arise at any moment in India, would you give an outline or skeleton of a Village Swaraj Committee, which could function in all village matters in the absence of, and without relying upon an over-head Government or other organization? In particular, how would you ensure that the Committee should be fully representative and that it would act impartially, efficiently and without favour or fear? What should be the scope of authority and the machinery to enforce its commands? And what should be the manner in which a committee or an individual member of it could be removed for corruption, inefficiency or other unfitness?

A : My idea of village Swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity. Thus every village's first concern will be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its cloth. It should have a reserve for its cattle, recreation and playground for adults and children. Then if there is more land available, it will grow *useful* money crops, thus excluding ganja, tobacco, opium and the like. The village will maintain a village theatre, school and public hall. It will have its own waterworks ensuring clean water supply. This can be done through controlled wells or tanks. Education will be compulsory up to the final basic course. As far as possible every activity will be conducted on the co-operative basis. There will be no castes such as we have today with their graded untouchability. Non-violence with its technique of Satyagraha and non-co-operation will be the sanction of the village community. There will be a compulsory service of village guards who will be selected by rotation from the register maintained by the village. The

Government of the village will be conducted by the *panchayat* of five persons annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. These will have all the authority and jurisdiction required. Since there will be no system of punishments in the accepted sense, this *panchayat* will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office. Any village can become such a republic today without much interference, even from the present Government whose sole effective connection with the villages is the exaction of the village revenue. I have not examined here the question of relations with the neighbouring villages and the centre if any. My purpose is to present an outline of village government. Here there is perfect democracy based upon individual freedom. The individual is the architect of his own government. The law of non-violence rules him and his government. He and his village are able to defy the might of a world. For the law governing every villager is that he will suffer death in the defence of his and his village's honour.

The reader may well ask me, as I am asking myself while penning these lines, as to why I have not been able to model Sevagram after the picture here drawn. My answer is, I am making the attempt. I can see dim traces of success though I can show nothing visible. But there is nothing inherently impossible in the picture drawn here. To model such a village may be the work of a life-time. Any lover of true democracy and village life can take up a village, treat it as his world and sole work, and he will find good results. He begins by being the village scavenger, spinner, watchman, medicine man and school-master all at once. If nobody comes near him, he will be satisfied with scavenging and spinning.

Harijan, 26-7-'42, p. 238.

HOW CAN INDIA BECOME TRULY FREE ?

(The following conversation ensues between the Editor and the Reader on the question of the Reader, what would the Editor (Gandhiji) suggest for freeing India.)

I

(From Chapter XIV of *Hind Swaraj* entitled "How Can India Become Free ?")

EDITOR : I do not expect my views to be accepted all of a sudden. My duty is to place them before readers like yourself. Time can be trusted to do the rest. We have already examined the conditions for freeing India, but we have done so indirectly ; we will now do so directly. It is a world-known maxim that the removal of the cause of a disease results in the removal of the disease itself. Similarly, if the cause of India's slavery be removed, India can become free.

READER : If Indian civilization is, as you say, the best of all, how do you account for India's slavery ?

EDITOR : This civilization is unquestionably the best, but it is to be observed that all civilizations have been on their trial. That civilization which is permanent, outlives it. Because the sons of India were found wanting, its civilization has been placed in jeopardy. But its strength is to be seen in its ability to survive the shock. Moreover, the whole of India is not touched. Those alone who have been affected by Western civilization have become enslaved. We measure the universe by our own miserable footrule. When we are slaves, we think that the whole universe is enslaved. Because we are in an abject condition, we think that the whole of India is in that condition. As a matter of fact, it is not so, yet it is as well to impute our slavery to the whole of India. But if we bear in mind the above fact, we can see that if we become free, India is free. And in this thought you have a definition of Swaraj. It is Swaraj

when we learn to rule ourselves. It is, therefore, in the palm of our hands. Do not consider this Swaraj to be like a dream. There is no idea of sitting still. The Swaraj that I wish to picture is such that, after we have once realized it, we shall endeavour to the end of our lifetime to persuade others to do likewise. But such Swaraj has to be experienced, by each one for himself. One drowning man will never save another. Slaves ourselves, it would be a mere pretension to think of freeing others. Now you will have seen that it is not necessary for us to have as our goal the expulsion of the English. If the English become Indianized, we can accommodate them. If they wish to remain in India along with their civilization, there is no room for them. It lies with us to bring about such a state of things.

READER : It is impossible that Englishmen should ever become Indianized.

EDITOR : To say that is equivalent to saying that the English have no humanity in them. And it is really beside the point whether they become so or not. If we keep our own house in order, only those who are fit to live in it will remain. Others will leave of their own accord. Such things occur within the experience of all of us.

READER : But it has not occurred in history.

EDITOR : To believe that what has not occurred in history will not occur at all is to argue disbelief in the dignity of man. At any rate, it behoves us to try what appeals to our reason. All countries are not similarly conditioned. The condition of India is unique. Its strength is immeasurable. We need not, therefore, refer to the history of other countries. I have drawn attention to the fact that, when other civilizations have succumbed, the Indian has survived many a shock.

READER : I cannot follow this. There seems little doubt that we shall have to expel the English by force of arms. So long as they are in the country, we cannot rest. One of our poets says that slaves cannot even dream of happiness. We are day by day becoming weakened owing

to the presence of the English. Our greatness is gone ; our people look like terrified men. The English are in the country like a blight which we must remove by every means.

EDITOR : In your excitement, you have forgotten all we have been considering. We brought the English and we keep them. Why do you forget that our adoption of their civilization makes their presence in India at all possible ? Your hatred against them ought to be transferred to their civilization. But let us assume that we have to drive away the English by fighting, how is that to be done ?

READER : In the same way as Italy did it. What was possible for Mazzini and Garibaldi is possible for us. You cannot deny that they were very great men.

II

(Chapter XV of *Hind Swaraj* entitled " Italy and India ")

EDITOR : It is well that you have instanced Italy. Mazzini was a great and good man ; Garibaldi was a great warrior. Both are adorable ; from their lives we can learn much. But the condition of Italy was different from that of India. In the first instance, the difference between Mazzini and Garibaldi is worth noting. Mazzini's ambition was not and has not yet been realized regarding Italy. Mazzini has shown in his writings on the duty of man that every man must learn how to rule himself. This has not happened in Italy. Garibaldi did not hold this view of Mazzini's. Garibaldi gave, and every Italian took arms. Italy and Austria had the same civilization ; they were cousins in this respect. It was a matter of tit for tat. Garibaldi simply wanted Italy to be free from the Austrian yoke. The machinations of Minister Cavour disgrace that portion of the history of Italy. And what has been the result ? If you believe that because Italians rule Italy the Italian nation is happy, you are groping in darkness. Mazzini has shown conclusively that Italy did not become free. Victor Emanuel gave one meaning to the expression ; Mazzini gave another. According to Emanuel, Cavour and even Garibaldi, Italy meant the King of Italy, and his

henchmen. According to Mazzini, it meant the whole of the Italian people, that is, its agriculturists. Emanuel was only its servant. The Italy of Mazzini still remains in a state of slavery. At the time of the so-called national war, it was a game of chess between two rival kings with the people of Italy as pawns. The working classes in that land are still unhappy. They, therefore, indulge in assassination, rise in revolt and rebellion on their part is always expected. What substantial gain did Italy obtain after the withdrawal of the Austrian troops? The gain was only nominal. The reforms for the sake of which the war was supposed to have been undertaken have not yet been granted. The condition of the people in general still remains the same. I am sure you do not wish to reproduce such a condition in India. I believe that you want the millions of India to be happy, not that you want the reins of government in your hands. If that be so, we have to consider only one thing: how can the millions obtain self-rule? You will admit that people under several Indian princes are being ground down. The latter mercilessly crush them. Their tyranny is greater than that of the English, and if you want such tyranny in India, then we shall never agree. My patriotism does not teach me that I am to allow people to be crushed under the heel of Indian princes if only the English retire. If I have the power, I should resist the tyranny of Indian princes just as much as that of the English. By patriotism I mean the welfare of the whole people, and if I could secure it at the hands of the English, I should bow down my head to them. If any Englishman dedicated his life to securing the freedom of India, resisting tyranny and serving the land, I should welcome that Englishman as an Indian.

Again, India can fight like Italy only when she has arms. You have not considered this problem at all. The English are splendidly armed; that does not frighten me, but it is clear that, to pit ourselves against them in arms, thousands of Indians must be armed. If such a thing be possible, how many years will it take? Moreover, to arm

India on a large scale, is to Europeanize it. Then her condition will be just as pitiable as that of Europe. This means, in short that India must accept European civilization and if that is what we want, the best thing is that we have among us those who are so well trained in that civilization. We will then fight for a few rights, will get what we can and so pass our days. But the fact is that the Indian nation will not adopt arms, and it is well that it does not.

READER : You are over-stating the facts. All need not be armed. At first, we shall assassinate a few Englishmen and strike terror ; then a few men who will have been armed will fight openly. We may have to lose a quarter of a million men, more or less, but we shall regain our land. We shall undertake guerilla warfare, and defeat the English.

EDITOR : That is to say, you want to make the holy land of India unholy. Do you not tremble to think of freeing India by assassination ? What we need to do is to sacrifice ourselves. It is a cowardly thought, that of killing others. Whom do you suppose to free by assassination ? The millions of India do not desire it. Those who are intoxicated by the wretched modern civilization think these things. Those who will rise to power by murder will certainly not make the nation happy. Those who believe that India has gained by Dhingra's act and other similar acts in India make a serious mistake. Dhingra was a patriot, but his love was blind. He gave his body in a wrong way ; its ultimate result can only be mischievous.

READER : But you will admit that the English have been frightened by these murders, and that Lord Morley's reforms are due to fear.

EDITOR : The English are both a timid and a brave nation. England is, I believe, easily influenced by the use of gun-powder. It is possible that Lord Morley has granted the reforms through fear, but what is granted under fear can be retained only so long as the fear lasts.

VIOLENCE OR INDUSTRIALIZATION CANNOT LEAD TO SWARAJ

(From the Chapter titled " Conclusion " in the book " A Paraphrase of Ruskin's *Unto This Last* " by Gandhiji) *

Ruskin's book thus paraphrased has a lesson for Indians no less than for Englishmen to whom it was primarily addressed. New ideas are in the air in India. Our young men who have received Western education are full of spirit. This spirit should be directed into the right channels, as otherwise it can only do us harm. ' Let us have Swaraj ' is one slogan ; ' let us industrialize the country ' is another.

But we hardly understand what is Swaraj. Natal, for instance, enjoys Swaraj but her Swaraj stinks in our nostrils, for she crushes the Negroes, and oppresses the Indians. If by some chance the Negroes and the Indians left Natal, its white men would fight among themselves and bring about their own destruction.

If not like Natal's, will we have Swaraj as in the Transvaal one of whose leaders, General Smuts, breaks his promises, says one thing and does another ? He has dispensed with the services of English policemen and employed Afrianders instead. I do not think that this is going to help any of the two nationalities in the long run. Selfish men will loot their own people when there are no more ' outsiders ' left to be looted.

The Swaraj is not enough to make a nation happy. What would be the result of Swaraj being conferred on a band of robbers ? They would be happy only if they were placed under the control of a good man who is not a robber himself. The United States, England, and France for instance are powerful States, but there is no reason to think that they are really happy.

* Published by the Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad-14, price 37 nP., postage etc. 13 nP.

Swaraj really means self-control. Only he is capable of self-control who observes the rules of morality, does not cheat or give up truth, and does his duty to his parents, wife and children, servants and neighbours. Such a man is in enjoyment of Swaraj, no matter where he lives. A State enjoys Swaraj if it can boast of a large number of such good citizens.

It is not right that one people should rule another. British rule in India is an evil, but let us not run away with the idea that all will be well when the British quit India.

The existence of British rule in the country is due to our disunity, immorality and ignorance. If these national defects are overcome, not only would the British leave India without a shot being fired but we would be enjoying real Swaraj.

Some foolish Indians rejoice in bomb-throwing, but if all the Britishers in the country were thus killed, the killers would become the rulers of India who would only have a change of masters. The bomb now thrown at Englishmen will be aimed at Indians after the English are there no longer. It was a Frenchman who murdered the President of the French Republic. It was an American who murdered President Cleveland. Let us not blindly imitate Western people.

If Swaraj cannot be attained by the sin of killing Englishmen, it cannot be attained either by the erection of huge factories. Gold and silver may be accumulated but they will not lead to the establishment of Swaraj. Ruskin has proved this to the hilt. Western civilization is a mere baby, a hundred or only fifty years old. And yet it has reduced Europe to a sorry plight. Let us pray that India is saved from the fate that has overtaken Europe, where the nations are poised for an attack on one another, and are silent only because of the stock-piling of armaments. Some day there will be an explosion, and then Europe will be a veritable hell on earth. Non-white races are looked upon

as legitimate prey by every European State. What else can we expect where covetousness is the ruling passion in the breasts of men ? Europeans pounce upon new territories like crows upon a piece of meat. I am inclined to think that this is due to their mass-production factories.

India must indeed have Swaraj but she must have it by righteous methods. Our Swaraj must be real Swaraj, which cannot be attained by either violence or industrialization. India was once a golden land, because Indians then had a heart of gold. The land is still the same but is a desert because we are corrupt. It can become a land of gold again only if the base metal of our present national character is transmuted into gold. The philosopher's stone which can effect this transformation is a little word of two syllables — Satya (truth). If every Indian sticks to truth, Swaraj will come to us of its own accord.

11

SOME THOUGHTS ON SWARAJ

(Gandhiji was opposed to the use of violence in the struggle for freedom. The following passages tell us why he was opposed to the attainment of Swaraj through warfare :)

1. If it is steel that is to decide the issue, it must be not Sikh or Gurkha steel, it must be an all-India steel. If it is brute force that is to rule, then the millions of India must learn the art of war, or must for ever remain prostrate at the feet of him who wields the sword, whether he is *paradeshi* or *swadeshi*. The millions must remain 'dumb-driven cattle'. Non-co-operation is an attempt to awaken the masses to a sense of their dignity and power. This can only be by enabling them to realize that they need not fear brute force.

Young India, 1-12-'20, p. 3.

2. I contend that the revolutionary method cannot succeed in India. If an open warfare were a possibility, I may concede that we may tread the path of violence that

the other countries have and at least evolve the qualities that the bravery on the battlefield brings forth. But the attainment of Swaraj through warfare I hold an impossibility for any time that we can foresee. Warfare may give us another rule for the English rule, but not self-rule in terms of the masses. The pilgrimage to Swaraj is a painful climb. It requires attention to details. It means vast organizing ability, it means penetration into the villages solely for the service of the villagers. In other words it means national education, i.e. education of the masses. It means an awakening of national consciousness among the masses. It will not spring like the magician's mango. It will grow almost unperceived like the banian tree. A bloody revolution will never perform the trick.

Young India, 21-5-'25, p. 178.

(Though Gandhiji considered transference of political power to India as absolutely essential, he would not be satisfied merely with such transference. In his scheme of Swaraj, he wanted to end all vestiges of exploitation of the masses.)

3. I feel that fundamentally the disease is the same in Europe as it is in India, in spite of the fact that in the former country, the people enjoy political self-government. No mere transference of political power in India will satisfy my ambition, even though I hold such transference to be a vital necessity of Indian national life. The people of Europe have no doubt political power but no Swaraj. Asian and African races are exploited for their partial benefit, and they, on their part, are being exploited by the ruling class or caste under the sacred name of democracy. At the root, therefore, the disease appears to be the same as in India.

Young India, 3-9-'25, p. 304.

4. It is the masses who have to attain Swaraj. It is neither the sole concern of the moneyed men nor that of the educated classes. Both must subserve their interest in any scheme of Swaraj.

Young India, 20-4-'21, p. 124.

5. I may tell you that the Congress does not belong to any particular group of men ; it belongs to all, but the protection of the poor peasantry, which forms the bulk of the population, must be its primary interest. The Congress must, therefore, truly represent the poor. But that does not mean that all other classes — the middle classes, the capitalist or zamindar — must go under. All that it aims at is that all other classes must subserve the interest of the poor.

Young India, 16-4-'31, p. 79.

6. I will, therefore, state the purpose. It is complete freedom from the alien yoke in every sense of the term, and this for the sake of the dumb millions. Every interest, therefore, that is hostile to their interest, must be revised or must subside if it is not capable of revision.

Young India, 17-9-'31, p. 263.

(The Swaraj that Gandhiji wanted would not be a monopoly of a few ; on the other hand it would be broad-based on the willing consent of the working population who would acquire the capacity to regulate and control authority.)

7. By Swaraj, I mean the government of India by the consent of the people as ascertained by the largest number of the adult population, male or female, native born or domiciled who have contributed by manual labour to the service of the State and who have taken the trouble of having their names registered as voters....I hope to demonstrate that real Swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when abused. In other words, Swaraj is to be attained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority.

Young India, 29-1-'25, pp. 40-41.

(The ultimate political goal of Gandhiji was, however, anarchism.)

8. Self-government means, continuous effort to be independent of government control, whether it is foreign government or whether it is national. Swaraj government

will be a sorry affair if people look up to it for the regulation of every detail of life.

Young India, 6-8-'25, p. 276.

9. To me political power is not an end but one of the means of enabling people to better their condition in every department of life. Political power means capacity to regulate national life through national representatives. If national life becomes so perfect as to become self-regulated, no representation becomes necessary. There is then a state of enlightened anarchy. In such a state every one is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour. In the ideal state, therefore, there is no political power because there is no State. But the ideal is never fully realized in life. Hence the classical statement of Thoreau that that government is best which governs the least.

Young India, 2-7-'31, p. 162.

12

THE PRINCE AND THE PEASANT UNDER SWARAJ OF MY CONCEPTION

(Translated from the Gujarati *Navajivan* dated 22-3-'31 under the caption of "The Prince and the Peasant.")

The following question which I have expanded a little without changing its spirit, was put to me the other day at a meeting of workers at Vile Parle (Bombay) :

" You say that the Swaraj of your conception will give equal justice to the prince and the peasant; it will protect both and safeguard the interests of both. Is not this self-contradictory? Just look at the labourer and the employer, the master of the house and his servant; the *brahman* and the *bhangi*, the rich man and the pauper. Whichever side you turn your eyes, you notice a class-war. The conflict between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' seems to be going on since pre-historical times. It seems that it is impossible for a person to be happy without inflicting hardship on

another. It appears to be the law of nature. You wish to alter the law of nature. Is it not an attempt as vain as striking your sword against the air ? ”

This is a good question and is possibly troubling many a mind. Let us consider it.

If there ever was something like *Ramraj* in the world, it should be possible to restore it. I believe that it did exist one-day. Here Rama means a *panchayat* (the council of five). God dwells in the *panchayat* because it represents public opinion. When the public opinion is free and un-artificial, it is truthful. A State built upon public opinion is the *Ramraj* for that area. We come across such relations even at present at some places. Some landholders excel their tenants in their simplicity and in working for their welfare. It is not that every king exploits his people. During my travels, I have come across both good and bad people. Every employer is not a heartless fellow. It is true that I have not seen several instances of rich men who behave as trustees or friends of the poor. I shall also admit that there is much scope for further improvement in the few that I have seen. But this is an experience gained in the atmosphere of a Satanic rule. So there need be no wonder if there is only one good Vibhishana in Lanka. The point is that if there is one, you can expect to have many. When exceptions multiply, they become the rule. So this is my opinion as to what is possible. I know, however, that the questioner will not be satisfied with this answer.

The effort to bring into operation what is possible is Satyagraha. *Satya* is just. A just administration is *Satyayuga* (age of truth), *Swaraj*, *Dharmaraj*, *Ramraj*, people's government. In such government, the ruler will be the protector, trustee and friend of the people. The difference between his life and that of the humble peasant will not be the difference between heaven and earth, as at present. There would be due sense of proportion between his palace and the peasant's hut. The difference between their respective wants would also be very small. Both of them will have pure water and air. The poor will get the food

they need. The ruler will not relish the proverbial fifty-six dishes but will be satisfied with six. If the poor takes his food in earthen or wooden utensils, the ruler may take it in those of brass. But the ruler cannot use silver and gold utensils without exploiting the poor. The poor will get the necessary clothing ; the ruler may have more suits, but the difference in quality must not be such as to cause jealousy. The children of the ruler and the peasant will learn in the same primary school. The former will not regard himself as the patron or benefactor of the people. He will not regard his services to his people as an obligation conferred upon them. There is no place for conferring obligations in the performance of one's duties. It is the duty of the ruler to serve his people.

What I have said about the ruler applies to all owners of wealth. Just as it is the duty of the ruler to be the trustee and friend of the people, so that of the latter is not to be jealous of the former. The poor man must know that to a great extent poverty is due to his own faults and shortcomings. So while the poor man must strive to improve his condition, let him not hate the ruler and wish his destruction. He must wish for the ruler's reform. He must not want rulership for himself, but remain content by earning his own wants. This condition of mutual co-operation and help is the Swaraj of my conception.

In my opinion, in order to attain this Swaraj, it is necessary to bring about radical reforms in the training of both the ruler and the ruled. Both the exploiter and the exploited are groping in the dark. Both have lost their way. The condition of neither is tolerable. But it is difficult for the rulers and the rich to realize this. But I believe that if one party realizes the truth, the other will also have to do so, and so I have chosen the service of the poor. It is not possible for all to be rulers. But every one can merge himself in the all. If the poor realize their rights and along with it their duties, we can have our Swaraj today. This realization cannot come as speedily through other methods as through Satyagraha. We have seen this with our own

eyes during the last twelve months. To the extent we took to corrupt methods in the prosecution of that Satyagraha, we have obstructed the way to Swaraj.

Satyagraha is the greatest means of educating the public and awakening the people. Satyagraha also means self-purification. To the rulers we can only talk of self-purification. It will take time to produce any effect upon them. The poor are always in search of a guide ; they know their own pains, but not the remedy. So they are willing to try whatever remedy is shown to them. In this situation, if they get a true friend, they do not leave him and follow his instructions to the best of their capacity ; So, in a way, the poor man is a seeker. Swaaraj is also attained through him. He has to know his strength, and having known it, to use it with restraint. When this happens, you may take it that the Swaraj of my conception has been attained. When the people have attained that strength, they would be able to resist successfully both the foreign as well as the indigenous government.

The duty of the workers, therefore, is to serve the people. It can be done only through truth and non-violence. To the extent the means are impure the progress of the people will be obstructed.

In the meantime, if the ruler and the moneyed class will understand the spirit of the age, they will relinquish their private ownership of wealth and the ability to produce wealth and voluntarily make themselves trustees of the same ; and since a trustee has also the right to earn his living, they would use that wealth for themselves only in a limited manner and to the extent of their wants. If they do not do so, the deadly struggle between the ruler and the ruled and the rich and the poor must inevitably go on. In the hope that Satyagraha would be able to check the advance of its poison, people like me have dedicated their all to that weapon.

Harijan, 30-10-'49, p. 292.

A WORKERS' REPUBLIC

(From "Weekly Letter")

A few representatives of the Red Shirts waited in deputation on Gandhiji and had a long heart to heart talk with him. They explained that it was never their intention to do any physical harm to him, that his life and his health were as dear to them as to any one else, and that individual terrorism was not their creed. They were adamant in their quarrel with the truce* which, they believed, can never lead them to their goal of Workers' and Peasants' Free Republic in India. "But my dear young men," said Gandhiji to them, overflowing with affection, "go and see Bihar and you will find a workers' and peasants' republic working there. Where there was fear and slavery ten years ago, there is courage and bravery and resistance to wrong. If you want capital to be extinct or if you want to abolish moneyed men or the capitalists, you will never succeed. What you must do is to demonstrate to the capitalists the power of labour and they will consent to be the trustees of those who toil for them. I do not want anything more for workers and peasants than enough to eat and house and clothe themselves and live in ordinary comfort as self-respecting human beings. After that condition of things is brought about the brainiest among them will certainly manage to acquire more wealth than the rest. But I have told you what I want. I want the rich to hold their riches in trust for the poor or to give them up for them. Do you know that I gave up all my property when I founded Tolstoy Farm? Ruskin's *Unto This Last* inspired me and I built my Farm on those lines. You will now recognize that I am, so to say, a 'foundation member' of your peasants' and workers' republic. And what do you prize more

* Gandhi-Irwin Truce was concluded in 1931.

— wealth or work ? Supposing you were to be stranded in the desert of Sahara with cartloads of money, how would it help you ? But if you can work you may not have to go hungry. How then is wealth to be preferred to work ? Go and see for yourselves the Labour Union of Ahmedabad at work and see how they are trying to establish a republic of their own.”

Young India, 2-4-'31, p. 58 at p. 59.

14

WHO IS A SOCIALIST ?

Socialism is a beautiful word, and so far as I am aware, in Socialism all the members of society are equal — none low, none high. In the individual body the head is not high because it is the top of the body, nor are the soles of the feet low because they touch the earth. Even as members of the individual body are equal, so are the members of society. This is Socialism.

In it the prince and the peasant, the wealthy and the poor, the employer and the employee are all on the same level. In terms of religion there is no duality in Socialism. It is all unity. Looking at society all the world over, there is nothing but duality or plurality. Unity is conspicuous by its absence. This man is high, that one is low, that is a Hindu, that a Muslim, the third a Christian, the fourth a Parsi, the fifth a Sikh, the sixth a Jew. Even among these there are subdivisions. In the unity of my conception there is perfect unity in the plurality of designs.

In order to reach this state we may not look on things philosophically and say that we need not make a move until all are converted to Socialism. Without changing our life we may go on giving addresses, forming parties and hawk-like seize the game when it comes our way. This is no Socialism. The more we treat it as game to be seized, the farther it must recede from us.

Socialism begins with the first convert. If there is one such, you can add zeros to the one and the first zero will account for ten and every addition will account for ten times the previous number. If, however, the beginner is a zero, in other words, no one makes the beginning, multiplicity of zeros will also produce zero value. Time and paper occupied in writing zeros will be so much waste.

This Socialism is as pure as crystal. It, therefore, requires crystal-like means to achieve it. Impure means result in an impure end. Hence the prince and the peasant will not be equalized by cutting off the prince's head, nor can the process of cutting off equalize the employer and the employed. One cannot reach truth by untruthfulness. Truthful conduct alone can reach truth. Are not non-violence and truth twins? The answer is an emphatic 'no'. Non-violence is embedded in truth and vice versa. Hence has it been said that they are faces of the same coin. Either is inseparable from the other. Read the coin either way. The spelling of words will be different. The value is the same. This blessed state is unattainable without perfect purity. Harbour impurity of mind or body and you have untruth and violence in you.

Therefore, only truthful, non-violent and pure-hearted Socialists will be able to establish a socialistic society in India and the world. To my knowledge there is no country in the world which is purely socialistic. Without the means described above the existence of such a society is impossible.

Harijan, 13-7-'47, p. 232.

TRUTH AND AHIMSA — THE TWIN-POLES OF SOCIALISM

(Originally appeared under the caption "Socialism")

Truth and Ahimsa must incarnate in Socialism. In order that they can, the votary must have a living faith in God. Mere mechanical adherence to truth and Ahimsa is likely to break down at the critical moment. Hence have I said that truth is God. This God is a living Force. Our life is of that Force. That Force resides in, but is not the body. He who denies the existence of that great Force, denies to himself the use of that inexhaustible Power and thus remains impotent. He is like a rudderless ship which, tossed about here and there, perishes without making any headway. The Socialism of such takes them nowhere, what to say of the society in which they live.

If such be the case, does it mean that no Socialist believes in God ? If there be any, why have they not made any visible progress ? Then again, many godly persons have lived before now ; why have they not succeeded in founding a socialistic State ?

It is difficult completely to silence these two doubts. Nevertheless, it is possible to say that it has perhaps never occurred to a believing Socialist that there is any connection between his Socialism and belief in God. It is equally safe to say that godly men as a rule never commend Socialism to the masses.

Superstitions have flourished in the world in spite of godly men and women. In Hinduism itself untouchability has, till of late, held undoubted sway.

The fact is that it has always been a matter of strenuous research to know this great Force and its hidden possibilities.

My claim is that in the pursuit of that search lies the discovery of Satyagraha. It is not, however, claimed that

all the laws of Satyagraha have been laid down or found. This, I do say, fearlessly and firmly, that every worthy object can be achieved by the use of Satyagraha. It is the highest and infallible means, the greatest force. Socialism will not be reached by any other means. Satyagraha can rid society of all evils, political, economic and moral.

Harijan, 20-7-'47, p. 240.

16

MY CLAIM TO BE A SOCIALIST WILL OUTLIVE THE SO-CALLED SOCIALISM

(Extracts from "After Four Years" by Pyarelal)

Fischer * opened with a broadside on the question of the Constituent Assembly. "I would go into the Constituent Assembly and use it for a different purpose — as a battlefield — and declare it to be a sovereign body. What do you say to this?"

"It is no use declaring somebody else's creation a sovereign body," said Gandhiji. "After all, it is a British creation. A body does not become a sovereign body by merely asserting it. To become sovereign, you have to behave in a sovereign way. Three tailors of Tooley Street in Johannesburg declared that they were a sovereign body. It ended in nothing. It was just a farce.

"I do not consider the proposed Constituent Assembly to be non-revolutionary. I have said, and I mean it cent per cent, that the proposed Constituent Assembly is an effective substitute for civil disobedience of the constructive type. Whilst I have the greatest admiration for the self-denial and spirit of sacrifice of our Socialist friends, I have never concealed the sharp difference between their method and mine. They frankly believe in violence and all that is in its bosom. I believe in non-violence through and through."

* Louis Fischer, a well-known American Journalist.

That turned the discussion on to Socialism. "You are a Socialist and so are they," interpolated Fischer.

Gandhiji : "I am, they are not. I was a Socialist before many of them were born. I carried conviction to a rabid Socialist in Johannesburg but that is neither here nor there. My claim will live when their Socialism is dead."

Fischer : "What do you mean by your Socialism ?"

Gandhiji : "My Socialism means 'even unto this last'. I do not want to rise on the ashes of the blind, the deaf and the dumb. In their Socialism, probably these have no place. Their one aim is material progress. For instance, America aims at having a car for every citizen. I do not. I want freedom for full expression of my personality. I must be free to build a staircase to Sirius if I want to. That does not mean that I want to do any such thing. Under the other Socialism, there is no individual freedom. You own nothing, not even your body."

Fischer : "Yes, but there are variations. My Socialism in its modified form means that the State does not own everything. It does in Russia. There you certainly do not own your body even. You may be arrested at any time, though you may have committed no crime. They may send you wherever they like."

Gandhiji : "Does not under your Socialism, the State own your children and educate them in any way it likes ?"

Fischer : "All States do that, America does it."

Gandhiji : "Then America is not very different from Russia."

Fischer : "You really object to dictatorship."

Gandhiji : "But Socialism is dictatorship or else arm-chair philosophy. I call myself a Communist also."

Fischer : "O, don't. It is terrible for you to call yourself a Communist. I want what you want, what Jaiprakash and the Socialists want — a free world. But the Communists don't. They want a system which enslaves the body and the mind."

Gandhiji : " Would you say that of Marx ? "

Fischer : " The Communists have corrupted the Marxist teaching to suit their purpose."

Gandhiji : " What about Lenin ? "

Fischer : " Lenin started it. Stalin has since completed it. When the Communists come to you, they want to get into the Congress and use it for their own ends."

Gandhiji : " So do the Socialists. My Communism is not very different from Socialism. It is harmonious blending of the two. Communism as I have understood it, is a natural corollary of Socialism."

Fischer : " Yes, you are right. There was a time when the two could not be distinguished. But today Socialists are very different from Communists."

Gandhiji : " You mean to say, you do not want Communism of Stalin's type."

Fischer : " But the Indian Communists want Communism of the Stalin type in India and want to use your name for that purpose."

Gandhiji : " They won't succeed."

Harijan, 4-8-'46, p. 245.

17

NON-VIOLENT SOCIALIST ORDER

(Originally appeared under the title " Jaiprakash's Picture ")

The following draft resolution was sent to me by Shri Jaiprakash Narain. He asked me, if I accepted his picture, to put it before the Working Committee at Ramgarh :

" The Congress and the country are on the eve of a great national upheaval. The final battle for freedom is soon to be fought. This will happen when the whole world is being shaken by mighty forces of change. Out of the catastrophe of the European War, thoughtful minds everywhere are anxious to create a new world—a world based on the co-operative goodwill of nations and men. At such a time, the Congress considers it necessary to state definitely the ideals of freedom for which it stands

and for which it is soon to invite the Indian people to undergo the uttermost sufferings.

“The free Indian nation shall work for peace between nations and total rejection of armaments and for the method of peaceful settlement of national disputes through some international authority freely established. It will endeavour particularly to live on the friendliest terms with its neighbours, whether they be great powers or small nations, and shall covet no foreign territory.

“The law of the land will be based on the will of the people freely expressed by them. The ultimate basis of maintenance of order shall be the sanction and concurrence of the people.

“The free Indian State shall guarantee full individual and civil liberty and cultural and religious freedom, provided that there shall be no freedom to overthrow by violence the constitution framed by the Indian people through a Constituent Assembly.

“The State shall not discriminate in any manner between citizens of the nation. Every citizen shall be guaranteed equal rights. All distinctions of birth and privilege shall be abolished. There shall be no titles emanating either from inherited social status or the State.

“The political and economic organization of the State shall be based on the principles of social justice and economic freedom. While this organization shall conduce to the satisfaction of the national requirements of every member of society, material satisfaction shall not be its sole objective. It shall aim at healthy living and the moral and intellectual development of the individual. To this end to secure social justice, the State shall endeavour to promote small-scale production carried on by individual or co-operative effort for the equal benefit of all concerned. All large-scale collective production shall be eventually brought under collective ownership and control and in this behalf, the State shall begin by nationalizing heavy transport, shipping, mining and the heavy industries. The textile industry shall be progressively decentralized.

“The life of the villages shall be reorganized and the villages shall be made self-governing units, self-sufficient in as large a measure as possible. The land laws of the country shall be drastically reformed on the principle that land shall belong to the actual cultivator alone, and that no cultivator shall have more land than is necessary to support his family on a fair standard of living. This will end the various systems of landlordism on the one hand and farm bondage on the other.

“The State shall protect the interests of the classes, but when these impinge upon the interests of those who have been

poor and down-trodden, it shall defend the latter and thus restore the balance of social justice.

“In all State-owned and State-managed enterprises, the workers shall be represented in the management through their elected representatives and shall have an equal share in it with the representatives of the Government.

“In the Indian States there shall be complete democratic government established and in accordance with the principles of abolition of social distinction and equality between citizens, there shall not be any titular heads of the States in the persons of Rajas and Nawabs.

“This is the order which the Congress envisages and which it shall work to establish. The Congress firmly believes that this order shall bring happiness, prosperity and freedom to the people of all races and religions in India, who together shall build on these foundations a great and glorious nation.”

I liked it and read his letter and the draft to the Working Committee. The Committee, however, thought that the idea of having only one resolution for the Ramgarh Congress should be strictly adhered to, and that the original, as framed at Patna, should not be tampered with. The reasoning of the Committee was unexceptionable and the draft resolution was dropped without any discussion on merits. I informed Shri Jaiprakash of the result of my effort. He wrote back suggesting that he would be satisfied if I could do the next best thing, namely publish it with full concurrence or such as I could give it.

I have no difficulty in complying with Shri Jaiprakash's wishes. As an ideal to be reduced to practice as soon as possible after India comes into her own, I endorse in general all except one of the propositions enunciated by Shri Jaiprakash.

I have claimed that I was a Socialist long before those I know in India had avowed their creed. But my Socialism was natural to me and not adopted from any books. It came out of my unshakable belief in non-violence. No man could be actively non-violent and not rise against social injustice, no matter where it occurred. Unfortunately Western Socialists have, so far as I know, believed in the necessity of violence for enforcing socialistic doctrines.

I have always held that social justice, even unto the least and the lowliest, is impossible of attainment by force. I have further believed that it is possible by proper training of the lowliest by non-violent means to secure redress of the wrongs suffered by them. That means is non-violent non-co-operation. At times, non-co-operation becomes as much a duty as co-operation. No one is bound to co-operate in one's own undoing or slavery. Freedom received through the effort of others, however benevolent, cannot be retained when such effort is withdrawn. In other words, such freedom is not real freedom. But the lowliest can feel its glow as soon as they learn the art of attaining it through non-violent non-co-operation.

It therefore gladdens me to find Shri Jaiprakash accepting, as I read his draft, non-violence for the purpose of establishing the order envisaged by him. I am quite sure that non-violent non-co-operation can secure what violence never can, and this by ultimate conversion of the wrong-doers. We in India have never given non-violence the trial it has deserved. The marvel is that we have attained so much even with our mixed non-violence.

Shri Jaiprakash's propositions about land may appear frightful. In reality they are not. No man should have more land than he needs for dignified sustenance. Who can dispute the fact that the grinding poverty of the masses is due to their having no land that they can call their own ?

But it must be realized that the reform cannot be rushed. If it is to be brought about by non-violent means, it can only be done by education both of the haves and the have-nots. The former should be assured that there never will be force used against them. The have-nots must be educated to know that no one can really compel them to do anything against their will, and that they can secure their freedom by learning the art of non-violence i.e. self-suffering. If the end in view is to be achieved, the education I have adumbrated has to be commenced now. An

atmosphere of mutual respect and trust has to be established as the preliminary step. There can then be no violent conflict between the classes and the masses.

Whilst, therefore, I have no difficulty in generally endorsing Shri Jaiprakash's proposition in terms of non-violence, I cannot endorse his proposition about the princes. In law they are independent. It is true that their independence is not worth much, for it is guaranteed by a stronger party. But as against us, they are able to assert their independence. If we come into our own through non-violent means, as is implied in Shri Jaiprakash's draft proposals, I do not imagine a settlement in which the princes will have effaced themselves. Whatever settlement is arrived at, the nation will have to carry out in full. I can therefore, only conceive a settlement in which the big States will retain their status. In one way this will be far superior to what it is today, but in another it will be limited so as to give the people of the States the same right of self-government within their States as the people of the other parts of India will enjoy. They will have freedom of speech, a free press and pure justice guaranteed to them. Perhaps Shri Jaiprakash has no faith in the princes automatically surrendering their autocracy. I have. First because they are as good human beings as we are, and secondly because of my belief in the potency of genuine non-violence. Let me conclude, therefore, by saying that the princes and all others will be true and amenable when we have become true to ourselves, to our faith, if we have it, and to the nation. At present we are half-hearted. The way to freedom will never be found through half-heartedness. Non-violence begins and ends by turning the searchlight inward.

Harijan, 20-4-'40, p. 96.

NON-VIOLENCE AND THE STATE

(Originally appeared under the title "Certain Questions")

A London friend has put seven questions on the working of non-violence. Though similar questions have been dealt with in *Young India* or *Harijan*, it is profitable to answer them in a single article, if perchance the answers may prove helpful.

Q. 1. Is it possible for a modern State (which is essentially based on force) to offer non-violent resistance for countering internal as well as external forces of disorder? Or is it necessary that people wanting to offer non-violent resistance should first of all divest themselves of State-authority and place themselves *vis-a-vis* the opponent entirely in a private capacity?

A. It is not possible for a modern State based on force, non-violently to resist forces of disorder, whether external or internal. A man cannot serve God and Mammon, nor be 'temperate and furious' at the same time. It is claimed that a State can be based on non-violence, i.e. it can offer non-violent resistance against a world combination based on armed force. Such a State was Ashoka's. The example can be repeated. But the case does not become weak even if it be shown that Ashoka's State was not based on non-violence. It has to be examined on its merits.

Q. 2. Do you think that it would be possible for a Congress Government to deal with foreign aggression or internal riots in an entirely non-violent manner?

A. It is certainly possible for a Congress Government to deal with 'foreign aggression or internal riots' in a non-violent manner. That the Congress may not share my belief is quite possible. If the Congress changes its course, the change will prove nothing save that the non-

violence hitherto offered was of the weak and that the Congress has no faith in State non-violence.

Q. 3. Does not the knowledge that the opponent is wedded to non-violence often encourage the bully ?

A. The bully has his opportunity when he has to face non-violence of the weak. Non-violence of the strong is any day stronger than that of the bravest soldier fully armed or a whole host.

Q. 4. What policy would you advocate if a section of the Indian people tries to enforce by sword a selfish measure which is not only repugnant to others but also basically unjust ? While it is possible for an unofficial organization to offer non-violent resistance in such a case, is it also possible for the government of the day to do so ?

A. The question assumes a case which can never exist. A non-violent State must be broad-based on the will of an intelligent people, well able to know its mind and act up to it. In such a State the assumed section can only be negligible. It can never stand against the deliberate will of the overwhelming majority represented by the State. The government of the day is not outside the people. It is the will of the overwhelming majority. If it is expressed non-violently, it cannot be a majority of one but nearer 99 against 1 in a hundred.

Q. 5. Is not non-violent resistance by the militarily strong more effective than that by the militarily weak ?

A. This is a contradiction in terms. There can be no non-violence offered by the militarily strong. Thus, Russia in order to express non-violence has to discard all her power of doing violence. What is true is that if those, who were at one time strong in armed might, change their mind, they will be better able to demonstrate their non-violence to the world, and, therefore, also to their opponents. Those who are strong in non-violence will not mind whether they are opposed by the militarily weak people or the strongest.

Q. 6. What should be the training and discipline for a non-violent army ? Should not certain aspects of conventional military training form a part of the syllabus ?

A. A very small part of the preliminary training received by the military is common to the non-violent army. These are discipline, drill, singing in chorus, flag hoisting, signalling and the like. Even this is not absolutely necessary and the basis is different. The positively necessary training for a non-violent army is an immovable faith in God, willing and perfect obedience to the chief of the non-violent army and perfect inward and outward co-operation between the units of the army.

Q. 7. Is it not better under existing circumstances that countries like India and England should maintain full military efficiency while resolving to give non-violent resistance a reasonable trial before taking any military step ?

A. The foregoing answers should make it clear that under no circumstance can India and England give non-violent resistance a reasonable chance whilst they are both maintaining full military efficiency. At the same time it is perfectly true that all military powers can carry on negotiations for peaceful adjustment of rival disputes. But here we are not discussing preliminary peace parleys before appealing to the arbitrament of war. We are discussing a final substitute for armed conflict called war, in naked terms mass murder.

Harijan, 12-5-'46, p. 128.

WILL A NON-VIOLENT STATE EVER COME INTO BEING ?

(Originally appeared under the title "A Young Canadian's Question")

From my American post, I pick up the following typical letter from Vancouver :

"I cannot truthfully say that I am an advocate of your 'India for the Indians' policy, but I have read your article in *Liberty* magazine and followed newspaper accounts of your illustrious life. I say 'illustrious' not in the sense of the mighty heads of Europe but of a man who is truly attempting to better his own people, not to perpetrate his personal fancies. I knew, of course, that your principles constitute a return of India to village industry and more international economic co-operation and goodwill towards man, but I should like to know just what stand your new democracy would take in world politics. The small countries of Europe thought that they would keep their finger out of the pie, as the saying goes, but look where they are now. I should like to know from the pen of the spiritual leader of India himself what the Government's attitude towards resident Britons would be and if British and other foreign trading firms would be allowed. Would the new Government of India follow the policies of Japan until Admiral Perry and the United States fleet entered the harbour of Yokohama in 1853 ? That is, would foreigners and foreign trade be excluded ?

"I hope that you will pardon the intrusion of a young Canadian who wishes to more fully understand the problems of your country."

Denuded of the courtesies, the writer's straight question is, "Will there be room for Britishers and foreigners in free India ?" The question should have nothing to do with my spirituality supposed or real. It does not arise for free America or free Britain. And it will not arise when India becomes really free. For, India will then be free to do what she likes, without let or hindrance from anybody. But it is pleasing to speculate what India would do if she becomes free, as she must sooner or later. If I have any influence over her policies, foreigners will be welcome, provided their presence is beneficial to the country. They will never

be allowed to exploit and impoverish the country as they have done hitherto.

What free India will otherwise look like remains to be seen. She has nothing to fear from the contemplation of the helplessness of the small nations of Europe, if she continues to tread the non-violent course she has done with more or less perfection and with more or less success. For a non-violent State bigness is wholly unnecessary for its protection against aggression. Such a State will need spend nothing for protection against aggression from without. Whether such a State will ever come into being is a fair question to ask. Reason suggests no flaw in the theoretical conception of it. Whether human nature will respond to what has been called an exactious call is another question. It has been known in individual cases to rise to unimaginable heights. There is nothing to prevent its multiplication by patient endeavour. Anyway I am not going to lose my faith and abandon the attempt because I can show no visible sign of such a response from India. One might as well abandon all hope, as some have done, for the attainment of India's unadulterated freedom. For they say, it will take centuries for India, which is largely and wholly unarmed, to become a military nation. I refuse to be prey to such despair. In the ringing words of Lokamanya, "Freedom is India's birthright, and she will have it, cost what it may." Glory lies in the attempt to reach one's goal and not in reaching it. I passionately believe in the possibility of attainment through the perfection of the non-violent technique whose hidden resources no one has fathomed. We have only found a foothold. Perseverance opens up treasures which bring perennial joy. If the toil is great, so is the fruit thereof.

Harijan, 5-4-'42, p. 104.

NON-VIOLENT RULE

(From "An Interesting Discourse — I" by M. D.)

To the question by a group of visitors — "How will you run your administration non-violently?" Gandhiji replied as under :

"If you assume that we would have won independence by non-violent means, it means that the bulk of the country had been organized non-violently. Without the vast majority of people having become non-violent, we could not attain non-violent Swaraj. If, therefore, we attain Swaraj by purely non-violent means, it should not be difficult for us to carry on the administration without the military. The *goondas* too will then have come under our control. If, for instance, in Sevagram we have five or seven *goondas* in a population of seven hundred who are non-violently organized, the five or seven will either live under the discipline of the rest or leave the village.

"But you will see that I am answering the question with the utmost caution, and my truth makes me admit that we might have to maintain a police force. But the police will be after our pattern, and not the British pattern. As we shall have adult suffrage, the voice of even the youngest of us will count. That is why I have said that the ideally non-violent State will be an ordered anarchy. That State will be the best governed which is governed the least. The pity is that no one trusts me with the reins of government! Otherwise I would show how to govern non-violently. If I maintain a police force, it will be a body of reformers."

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"But," said Shri Kher*, intervening at this stage, "the Congress ministers had no non-violent power with

* Balasaheb Kher, Chief Minister of Bombay during 1937-'39 and 1946-'52.

them. Even if 500 *goondas* had run amok and had been allowed to go unchecked, they would have dealt untold havoc. I do not know how even you would have dealt with them."

"Surely, surely," said Gandhiji, "I had rehearsed such situations. The ministers could on such occasions have gone out and allowed themselves to be done to death by the *goondas*. But let us face the fact that we had not the requisite Ahimsa. We went in with our half-baked Ahimsa. I do not mind it, inasmuch as we gave up power the moment we felt we should give it up. I am sure that, if we had adhered to strictest non-violence during these two or three years, the Congress would have made a tremendous advance in the direction of Ahimsa and also independence."

"But," said Balasaheb, "four or five years ago when there was a riot, and I appealed to the leaders to go and throw themselves into the conflagration, no one was ready."

"So you are supporting my argument. You agree that our loyalty to Ahimsa was lip-loyalty and not heart-loyalty. And if even the half-baked Ahimsa carried us a long way, does it not follow that thorough Ahimsa would have carried us very far indeed, even if it had not already brought us to the goal?"

"But we cannot visualize how you will stand non-violently against a foreign invasion."

"I cannot draw the whole picture to you because we have no past experience to fall back upon and there is no reality facing us today. We have got the Government army manned by the Sikhs, Pathans and Gurkhas. What I can conceive is this that with my non-violent army of, say, two thousand people I should put myself between the two contending armies. But this, I know, is no answer. I can only say that we shall be able to reduce the invader's violence to a minimum. The general of a non-violent army has got to have greater presence of mind than that of a violent army, and God would bless him with the necessary resourcefulness to meet situations as they arise."

Shri Kher now raised a philosophical question. "The world," he said, "is made up of pairs of opposites. Where there is fear, there is courage too. When we walk on the edge of a precipice we walk warily, for we have fear. Fear is not a thing to despise. Will your non-violent army be above these pairs of opposites?"

"No," said Gandhiji, replying in the same philosophical terminology. "No, for the simple reason that my army will represent one of the pair — Ahimsa — out of the pair of Himsa and Ahimsa. Neither I nor my army is above the pair of opposites. The state of *gunatita*, in the language of the Gita, rises above Himsa and Ahimsa both. Fear has its use, but cowardice has none. I may not put my finger into the jaws of a snake, but the very sight of the snake need not strike terror into me. The trouble is that we often die many times before death overtakes us.

"But let me explain what my army will be like. They need not and will not have the resourcefulness or understanding of the general, but they will have a perfect sense of discipline to carry out faithfully his orders. The general should have the quality which commands the unquestioning obedience of his army, and he will expect of them nothing more than this obedience. The Dandi March was entirely my conception. Pandit Motilalji first laughed at it, he thought it to be a quixotic adventure, and Jamnalalji suggested instead a march on the Viceroy's House! But I could not think of anything but the salt march as I had to think in terms of millions of our countrymen. It was a conception that God gave me. Pandit Motilalji argued for some time, and then he said he must not argue as after all I was the general, and he must have faith in me. Later when he saw me in Jambusar, he was completely converted for he saw with his own eyes the awakening that had come over the masses. And it was an almost magical awakening. Where in history shall we find parallels of the cool courage that our women displayed in such large numbers?"

"And yet none of the thousands who took part in the movement were above the average. They were erring, sin-

ning mortals. God has a way of making use of the most fragile instruments and remaining Himself untouched by everything. Only He is *gunatita*.

“And then what after all is the army that wins? You know Rama’s reply to Vibhishana when the latter wondered how Rama would be able to conquer a foe like Ravana, when he had no chariot, no armour, nor any shoes to his feet? Rama says* :

‘The chariot, my dear Vibhishana, that wins the victory for Rama is of a different sort from the usual one. Manliness and courage are its wheels; unflinching truth and character its banners and standards; strength, discrimination, self-restraint and benevolence its horses, with forgiveness, mercy, equanimity, their reins; prayer to God is that conqueror’s unerring charioteer, dispassion his shield, contentment his sword, charity his axe, intellect his spear and perfect science his stout bow. His pure and unwavering mind stands for a quiver, his mental quietitude and his practice of *yama* and *niyama* stand for the sheaf of arrows, and the homage he pays to Brahmanas and his guru is his impenetrable armour. There is no other equipment for victory comparable to this; and, my dear friend, there is no enemy who can conquer the man who takes his stand on the chariot of *dharma*. He who has a powerful chariot like this is a warrior who can conquer even that great and invincible enemy — the world. Harken unto me and fear not.’

“That is the equipment,” added Gandhiji, “that can lead us to victory. I have not retired from the world, nor do I mean to. I am no recluse. I am content to do what little work I can in Sevagram and give what guidance I can to those that come to me. What we need is faith. And what is there to be lost in following the right path? The worst that can happen to us is that we shall be crushed. Better to be crushed than to be vanquished.

“But if we had to equip ourselves violently, I should be at my wit’s end. I cannot even think out an armament plan, much less work it. On the other hand my non-violent plan is incredibly simpler and easier, and with God as our

* Gandhiji only made a reference to these verses from Tulsidas’ Ramayan. I translate them here fully for the benefit of the reader. — M. D.

Commander and Infallible Guide where is there cause for any fear ? ”

Harijan, 25-8-'40, p. 261.

21

NON-VIOLENT DEFENCE

(From “ Question Box ”)

The following question has been given by a British military officer who read with great interest the article in the *Harijan* of July 28, 1946, on “ Independence ”. The officer is a military engineer, widely travelled in America and Europe, and has seen with his own eyes the horrors of the war in Germany.

Q. In this ideal State (there is no doubt that it is ideal) how can one be sure that outside aggression can be avoided ? If the State has no modern army with modern weapons which are the product of the machine age, an invading army with modern weapons could overrun the country and subject the inhabitants to slavery.

A. The questioner, who claims to have read and re-read my article carefully and says he has liked it and is a military man, has evidently missed the central point of my article, viz. that however small a nation or even a group may be, it is able, even as the individual, provided that it has one mind as also the will and the grit, to defend its honour and self-respect against a whole world in arms. Therein consists the matchless strength and beauty of the unarmed. That is non-violent defence which neither knows nor accepts defeat at any stage. Therefore, a nation or a group which has made non-violence its final policy, cannot be subjected to slavery even by the atom bomb.

Harijan, 18-8-'46, p. 265.

MY IDEA OF A POLICE FORCE

A friend writes as follows :

“The English sister, whom you recently quoted, rightly says that efforts should always be made to stem external aggression by non-violent means, and that present circumstances offer a peculiarly suitable opportunity for demonstrating that it is possible to secure better results through non-violence than through armed force. But Ahimsa as a weapon to counter internal disorders presents difficulties. In our country there can be three types of internal disturbances, viz., communal, industrial and dacoities. The root causes of these are mutual distrust, social injustice and grinding poverty due to economic exploitation and unemployment. So long as these causes exist, the three-fold disturbances will take place in spite of armed forces. Your constructive programme is the only means of removing these root causes. But it will take time. What is to be done in the meantime ? Can non-violence solve the difficulties ?

“Can we envisage an order of society in which we will not have to resort to Himsa in any form whatsoever ? Suppose for argument’s sake that there exists a society where the majority does not possess goods that would excite envy and where everyone has the wherewithal to live contentedly. Even then it does not seem possible that there will be no disputes over proprietorship of land, lending and borrowing of money, and other business dealings. For these, therefore, we must provide the means of justice and see that the decisions of the courts or arbitration boards are carried out. For this it will be essential to have a police force. You have yielded this point. But I should like to know what restrictions you would place on the police force. If there were a non-violent Government in power today, would it use the police force for quelling internal disorders ? And are you willing to maintain it for all time or only temporarily ? My mind refuses to go so far as to envisage a time when a police force will be a superfluity. There seems to me to be no escape from placing this limitation, as it were, on Ahimsa.”

The questions asked in this letter are of the utmost importance and deserve notice. If true Ahimsa had come into being within us, and if our so-called Satyagraha movements had been truly non-violent, these questions would not have arisen because they would have been solved.

For one who has never seen the arctic regions an imaginary description of them, however elaborate, can convey but an inadequate idea of the reality. Even so is it with Ahimsa. If all Congressmen had been true to their creed, we would not be vacillating between violence and non-violence as we are today. The fruits of Ahimsa would be in evidence everywhere. There would be communal harmony, the demon of untouchability would have been cast out, and, generally speaking, we should have evolved an ordered society. But the reverse is the case just now. There is even definite hostility to the Congress in certain quarters. The word of Congressmen is not always relied on. The Muslim League and most of the Princes have no faith in the Congress and are in fact inimical to it. If Congressmen had true Ahimsa in them, there would be none of this distrust. In fact the Congress would be the beloved of all.

Therefore I can only place an imaginary picture before the votaries of Ahimsa.

So long as we are not saturated with pure Ahimsa we cannot possibly win Swaraj through non-violence. We can come into power only when we are in a majority or, in other words, when the large majority of people are willing to abide by the law of Ahimsa. When this happy state prevails the spirit of violence will have all but vanished and internal disorder will have come under control.

Nevertheless I have conceded that even in a non-violent State a police force may be necessary. This, I admit, is a sign of my imperfect Ahimsa. I have not the courage to declare that we can carry on without a police force as I have in respect of an army. Of course I can and do envisage a State where the police will not be necessary ; but whether we shall succeed in realizing it, the future alone will show.

The police of my conception will, however, be of a wholly different pattern from the present-day force. Its ranks will be composed of believers in non-violence. They will be servants, not masters of the people. The people will instinctively render them every help, and through mutual

co-operation they will easily deal with the ever-decreasing disturbances. The police force will have some kind of arms, but they will be rarely used, if at all. In fact the policemen will be reformers. Their police work will be confined primarily to robbers and dacoits. Quarrels between labour and capital and strikes will be few and far between in a non-violent State, because the influence of the non-violent majority will be so great as to command the respect of the principal elements in society. Similarly there will be no room for communal disturbances. Then we must remember that when such a Congress Government comes into power the large majority of men and women of 21 years and over will have been enfranchised. The rigid and cramped constitution of today has of course no place in this picture.

Harijan, 1-9-'40, p. 265.

23

CONGRESS MINISTERS AND NON-VIOLENCE

Shri Shankarrao Deo writes :

“Many people do not understand why those who call themselves Satyagrahis, resort to the use of the military and the police, the moment they become ministers of Government. The people feel that this is a breach of both the creed and the policy of Ahimsa. This popular belief seems to be consistent with reason. The inconsistency between belief and action of the Congress ministers and the exploitation of the same by their opponents, both Congress and non-Congress, makes it hard for our workers to stand up to the criticism.

“Generally speaking, Congress Ahimsa has been the Ahimsa of the weak. It was bound to be so in the present development of the country and this fact is well known to you. You claim that there is a special fire in the Ahimsa of the strong. At the same time you accepted leadership of the weak, in order to make them strong through the use of Ahimsa. And, in spite of their weakness, governmental power has today come into their hands. It is impossible for them today to put down disturbances without the use of the police and the military, and if they tried to do so, they would not only not succeed, but they would not get the co-operation of the people either.

“I did once ask you, whether a Satyagrahi should take high office if it came his way and if he did, how should he promote non-violence? I hold that the person who has made non-violence his creed, should not take office and he will never be happy there. But there can be no such difficulty for those who have accepted Ahimsa only as a policy. Many Congressmen have accepted office and you have permitted them to do so. The question arises as to whether you can expect those who believe in Ahimsa, to act up to it, at least in their personal capacity, during disturbances. Further having acquired strength through non-violence, how should it be used in order to bring in a State where there is need for the least government? If you cannot lighten our path towards the desired goal, Satyagraha will not be considered a full-fledged weapon.”

From my point of view the answer is easy. I have been saying for some time, that the words “truth and non-violence” should be removed from the Congress Constitution. But whether they are actually removed or not, let us assume that they are and then we shall be able to come to an independent judgment on the rightness or wrongness of any action. I am convinced that so long as we have to rely on the use of the military and even the police for preserving the internal order, we shall continue to remain the slaves of either Britain or some other foreign power. It matters little then, whether the government is in the hands of Congress- or non-Congressmen. Let us assume that Congress ministers are not pledged to non-violence. Let us further assume that Hindus, Musalmans and others want military and police protection. If they do, they will continue to receive it. Those ministers who are wedded to non-violence, must resign, since they would object to the use of the military and the police. The significance of it all is that so long as our people have not the wisdom to come to a mutual understanding, so long will *goondalism* continue and we shall not be able to generate the true strength of Ahimsa within us.

Now as to how this non-violent strength can be created. I gave the answer to this question in the *Harijan* of August 4th, in replying to a letter from Ahmedabad. So long as we have not cultivated the strength to die with

courage and love in our hearts, we cannot hope to develop the Ahimsa of the strong.

There remains the question as to whether in an ideal society, there should be any or no government. I do not think, we need worry ourselves about this at the moment. If we continue to work for such a society, it will slowly come into being to an extent, such that the people can benefit by it. Euclid's line is one without breadth but no one has so far been able to draw it and never will. All the same it is only by keeping the ideal line in mind that we have made progress in geometry. What is true here is true of every ideal.

It must be remembered that nowhere in the world, does a State without government exist. If at all it could ever come into being, it would be in India ; for, ours is the only country where the attempt has, at any rate, been made. We have not yet been able to show that bravery to the degree which is necessary and for the attainment of which there is only one way. Those who have faith in the latter, have to demonstrate it. In order to do so, the fear of death has to be completely shed, just as we have shed the fear of prisons.

Harijan, 15-9-'46, p. 309.

24

DO NOT ELIMINATE TRUTH AND NON-VIOLENCE

A correspondent who sends his name and describes himself as devoted to service writes :

"I read your *Harijanbandhu* regularly. Recently in your reply to Shri Shankarrao Deo, you have said : ' I have been saying for some time that the words "truth and non-violence" should be removed from the Congress Constitution.'

"If this happens in the existing circumstances, people will lose their faith in Congress because they will feel that so long as it was not in power it was thought best to adhere to truth and non-violence but now that power has come, it contemplates removing these words from the Constitution....

“If these words are eliminated from the Constitution, Congress will fall from the high pedestal which these means alone have secured for it. It will lose in prestige. You have always said that you yourself cannot go forward one step without truth and non-violence and is it not their adherence to these that makes the public think of Congressmen as trustworthy, merciful, full of the spirit of service and bravery? The tree must perish if its roots are destroyed. You must see to it that the roots go deeper and deeper and are not eradicated.

“Therefore, I feel that you should compel every Congressman to follow these principles and if he refuses, he must leave the Congress.”

How can I, the champion of Ahimsa, compel anyone to perform ‘even a good act’? Has not a well-known Englishman said that to make mistakes as a free man is better than being in bondage in order to avoid them? I believe in the truth of this. The reason is obvious. The mind of a man who remains good under compulsion cannot improve, in fact it worsens. And when compulsion is removed, all the defects well up to the surface with even greater force.

Moreover, no one should be a dictator. Even the Congress cannot force its members to follow truth and non-violence. These have to be accepted willingly from the heart.

I have been recommending the elimination of these words from the Constitution for over a year....I have strong grounds for my recommendation. Congress may not cover untruth and violence under the guise of truth and non-violence. Is not this an all-sufficing reason? If Congressmen were no hypocrites, nothing could be better than that Congress should adhere to these two pillars.

I could never wish the Congress, the moment it comes into power, to discard the very ladder by which it has climbed so high. I believe that if Congressmen, while in power, renounce truth and non-violence, the lustre surrounding the Congress will grow dim.

We must all guard against one mistake. There is no rule against following what is not in the Constitution.

Indeed my hope is that when these words are removed, all or a large majority of Congressmen will heartily follow truth and non-violence even to the point of death.

The writer has forgotten to mention one thing which I should like to clarify. The words in the Constitution are 'peaceful and legitimate'. I have no right to interpret them as truthful and non-violent, if they don't bear that meaning. Congress has adopted them as a policy, not as a creed. The question of my right to retain or eliminate them does not arise. But whilst it lasts, policy is tantamount to creed and hence becomes obligatory. Of course, my recommendation has no meaning if 'peaceful' can be interpreted as violent and 'legitimate' as untruthful.

Harijan, 29-9-'46, p. 333.

25

I BELIEVE IN NON-VIOLENT COMMUNISM

(Originally appeared in the "Weekly Letter" by M. D. under the title "An Egyptian Interviewer")

We were dead tired and preparing to get to bed, as we had to get out at three o'clock the next morning, for a tour in the cyclone area in Andhradesh when a heavily built man dressed in European costume looked into the carriage window of our moving train and asked in an English which was pronounced with a French accent and intonation: "Sir, I am coming all the way from Egypt, and I must have a chance of shaking hands with the greatest man in India and of a talk with him." There was nothing for it but to have him in, but the door was locked, and we asked him to come at the next station. But he wanted to lose no time, and he sneaked through the window and we helped him in. He was happy that Egypt had won a measure of independence and wished India also might do so. "But may I ask a few questions? I know you are tired and must have rest, but I am never again in my life going to have this opportunity and you must let me have

this chance." Gandhiji's eyes were heavy with sleep, but he had no heart to avoid this friendly stranger. "Come along," he said.

"What do you think of Communism? Do you think it would be good for India?" was his first question.

"Communism of the Russian type, that is Communism which is imposed on a people, would be repugnant to India. I believe in non-violent Communism," answered Gandhiji.

"But Communism in Russia is against private property. Do you want private property?"

"If Communism came without any violence, it would be welcome. For then no property would be held by anybody except on behalf of the people and for the people. A millionaire may have his millions, but he will hold them for the people. The State could take charge of them whenever they would need them for the common cause."

"Is there any difference of opinion between you and Jawaharlal in respect of Socialism?"

"There is, but it is a difference in emphasis. He perhaps puts an emphasis on the result, whereas I put on the means. Perhaps according to him, I am putting an over-emphasis on non-violence, whereas he, though he believes in non-violence, would want to have Socialism by other means, if it was impossible to have it by non-violence. Of course my emphasis on non-violence becomes one of principle. Even if I was assured that we could have independence by means of violence, I should refuse to have it. It won't be real independence."

"But do you think the English will leave India to you and go back peacefully as a result of your non-violent agitation?"

"I do think so."

"What is the basis of your belief?"

"I base my faith in God and His justice."

The friend seemed to be deeply impressed. He took the words down and said: "You are more Christian than we so-called Christians. I will write these words down in block letters."

“ You must,” said Gandhiji, “ otherwise God would not be God of Love but God of violence.”

Here the friend left us in peace, and before the next station came, Gandhiji was fast asleep.

Harijan, 13-2-'37, p. 1, at p. 6.

26

CONVERSION v. SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM

(Originally appeared under the caption of “ So-called Inconsistencies ”)

I have some very persistent correspondents who put posers before me. Here is a specimen letter from one such correspondent :

“ Whenever economic troubles arise and whenever questions have been put to you on the economic relations of capital and labour you have put forth the theory of trusteeship which has always puzzled me. You want the rich to hold all their property in trust for the poor and expend it for their benefit. If I ask you whether this is possible you will tell me that my question arises from a belief in the essential selfishness of human nature and that your theory is based on the essential goodness of human nature. However in the political sphere you do not hold such views without, at the same time, losing your faith in the fundamental goodness of human nature. The British claim the same trusteeship for their domination of India. But you have lost faith in the British Empire long ago, and today there is no greater enemy to it than you. Is it consistent to have one law for the political world and another for the economic world ? Or do you mean to say that you have lost faith in capitalism and capitalists just as you have lost faith in British Imperialism and the British ? For, your trusteeship theory sounds very much like the Divine Right theory of kings which has been exploded long ago. When one man, who was allowed to hold political power in trust for all the others and who derived it from them, misused it, people revolted against it and democracy was born. Similarly now when a few, who ought to hold the economic power in trust for the others from whom they derive it, use it for their own self-aggrandizement and to the detriment of the rest, the inevitable result is the deprivation of the few of the means of economic power by the many, i.e. the birth of Socialism.

“ Hitherto violence was the only recognized means to attain anything good or bad. When violence is employed even with a

view to achieve good, it brings evil in its train and compromises the good achieved. Now I take it that your definite contribution to the world lies in your having successfully demonstrated the efficacy of another means namely non-violence which is superior to violence and does not poison human relations. Therefore, my fondest hope is that you should fight and end the present economic order non-violently and help to create a new one."

I see no inconsistency in my treatment of capitalism or imperialism. My correspondent has been led into a confusion of thought. I have not talked or thought of what kings, imperialists or capitalists claim and have claimed. I have talked and written of how capital may be treated. And then it is one thing to make a claim and another to live up to it. Not everyone like me (say) who claims to be a servant of the people becomes that by the mere assertion. And yet all would appreciate persons like me, if we were found to be living up to our claim. Similarly would all rejoice if a capitalist were to divest himself of exclusive ownership and declare himself to be in possession as a trustee for the people. It is highly probable that my advice will not be accepted and my dream will not be realized. But who can guarantee that the Socialists' dream will be realized? Socialism was not born with the discovery of the misuse of capital by capitalists. As I have contended, Socialism, even Communism, is explicit in the first verse of *Ishopanishad*. What is true is that when some reformers lost faith in the method of conversion, the technique of what is known as scientific Socialism was born. I am engaged in solving the same problem that faces scientific Socialists. It is true however that my approach is always and only through unadulterated non-violence. It may fail. If it does, it will be because of my ignorance of the technique of non-violence. I may be a bad exponent of the doctrine in which my faith is daily increasing. The A.I.S.A. and the A.I.V.I.A. are organizations through which the technique of non-violence is being tested on an all-India scale. They are special autonomous bodies created by the Congress for the purpose of enabling me to conduct my experiments without being fettered by the vicissitudes of

policy to which a wholly democratic body like the Congress is always liable. Trusteeship, as I conceive it, has yet to prove its worth. It is an attempt to secure the best use of property for the people by competent hands.

Now for the second part of the letter. I do not divide life into watertight compartments. The life of a nation like that of individuals is an indivisible whole. My retirement from the Congress or political life so called does not mean the slightest diminution in my yearning for India's complete independence ; nor is civil disobedience any distinct process of non-violence. It is one of the many non-violent processes which are in no way inconsistent with one another. What I have to do is to give a clear demonstration of non-violence in all my actions. I claim to be conducting my experiment in a scientific spirit. In the garden of non-violence are many plants. They are all from the same parent. They may not be all used simultaneously. Some are less powerful than others. All are harmless. But they have to be handled skilfully. I am applying such skill to their use as God has given me. But because I use one plant rather than another at any time, it does not follow that I give up the fight. It is a fight to the finish. Defeat has no place in the dictionary of non-violence.

Harijan, 20-2-'37, p. 12.

27

CAN YOU AVOID CLASS WAR ?

(From the editorial under the caption "Questions and Answers")

Q : If you will benefit the workers, the peasant and the factory hand, can you avoid class war ?

A : I can, most decidedly, if only the people will follow the non-violent method. The past twelve months have abundantly shown the possibility of non-violence adopted even as a policy. When the people adopt it as a principle of conduct, class war becomes an impossibility. The experiment in that direction is being tried in Ahmedabad. It has yielded most satisfactory results and there is

every likelihood of its proving conclusive. By the non-violent method we seek not to destroy the capitalist, we seek to destroy capitalism. We invite the capitalist to regard himself as a trustee for those on whom he depends for the making, the retention and the increase of his capital. Nor need the worker wait for his conversion. If capital is power, so is work. Either power can be used destructively or creatively. Either is dependent on the other. Immediately the worker realizes his strength, he is in a position to become a co-sharer of the capitalist instead of remaining his slave. If he aims at becoming the sole owner, he will most likely be killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. Inequalities in intelligence and even opportunity will last till the end of time. A man living on the banks of a river has any day more opportunity of growing crops than one living in an arid desert. But if inequalities stare us in the face, the essential equality too is not to be missed. Every man has an equal right for the necessities of life even as birds and beasts have. And since every right carries with it a corresponding duty and the corresponding remedy of resisting any attack upon it, it is merely a matter of finding out the corresponding duties and remedies to vindicate the fundamental elementary equality. The corresponding duty is to labour with my limbs, and the corresponding remedy is to non-co-operate with him who deprives me of the fruit of my labour. And if I would recognize the fundamental equality, as I must, of the capitalist and the labourer, I must not aim at his destruction. I must strive for his conversion. My non-co-operation with him will open his eyes to the wrong he may be doing. Nor need I be afraid of some one else taking my place when I have non-co-operated. For I expect to influence my co-workers so as not to help the wrong-doing of my employer. This kind of education of the mass of workers is no doubt a slow process, but as it is also the surest, it is necessarily the quickest. It can be easily demonstrated that destruction of the capitalist must mean destruction in the end of the worker and as no human being is so bad as to be beyond redemption, no

human being is so perfect as to warrant his destroying him whom he wrongly considers to be wholly evil.

Young India, 26-3-'31, p. 49.

28

CLASS CONFLICT IS NOT INEVITABLE

(From "Weekly Letter" of M. D.)

Mr. Basil Mathews had perhaps other things at the back of his mind when he talked of THE constructive revolution, and so he discussed the place of the moneylender and the zamindar in the village economy. "The moneylender who is inevitable today," said Gandhiji, "will gradually eliminate himself. Nor are co-operative banks needed, because when I have taught Harijans the art I want to teach them they will not need much ready money. Besides those who are today deep down in mire cannot make use of co-operative banks. I am not so much concerned in getting them loans of money or plots of land as I am about getting them bread and butter and even a little cheese. When people have learnt the art of turning idle hours to wealth all the adjustment we need will follow."

"But what about the zamindar? Would you eliminate him? Would you destroy him?"

"I do not want to destroy the zamindar, but neither do I feel that the zamindar is inevitable. I will illustrate how I work out my trusteeship theory here. In this village Jamnalalji has a 75 per cent share. Of course I have come here not by design but by accident. When I approached Jamnalalji for help he built me the required hut and out-houses and said, 'Whatever profit there is from Segaoon you may take for the welfare of the village.' If I can persuade other zamindars to do likewise, village improvement becomes easy. Of course the next question is that of the land system and that of Government exploitation. I regard

the difficulties surrounding that aspect of the question as for the moment necessary evils. If the present programme is carried through, I shall perhaps know how to deal with the Government exploitation."

"Your actual economic policy would differ from Mr. Nehru's? He, so far as I understand him, would wipe out the zamindar."

"Yes," said Gandhiji, "we seem to differ in our ideas of village uplift and reconstruction. The difference is of emphasis. He does not mind the village uplift movement. He believes in industrialization; I have grave doubts about its usefulness for India. He believes in the ultimate inevitability of class conflict though he would avoid it if he could. I expect to convert the zamindars and other capitalists by the non-violent method, and therefore there is for me nothing like an inevitability of class conflict. For it is an essential part of non-violence to go along the line of least resistance. The moment the cultivators of the soil realize their power, the zamindari evil will be sterilized. What can the poor zamindar do when they say that they will simply not work the land unless they are paid enough to feed and clothe and educate themselves and their children in a decent manner? In reality the toiler is the owner of what he produces. If the toilers intelligently combine, they will become an irresistible power. That is how I do not see the necessity of class conflict. If I thought it inevitable, I should not hesitate to preach it and teach it."

Harijan, 5-12-'36, p. 337 at p. 338.

WILL SOCIALIST REVOLUTION LEAD TO RAMARAJYA ?

(Originally appeared in the columns of "Question Box")

Q. The majority of the Socialists claim that if there was a Socialist revolution, the economic question will come to the forefront throwing the communal conflict in the background. Do you agree? If such a revolution takes place, will it promote the establishment of the Kingdom of God which you call Ramarajya ?

A. The economic conflict you envisage is likely to make the Hindu-Muslim tension less acute. Even the end of Hindu-Muslim conflict will not end all our troubles. What is happening is this. With the end of slavery and the dawn of independence, all the weaknesses of society are bound to come to the surface. I do not see any reason to be unnecessarily upset about it. If we keep our balance at such a time, every tangle will be solved. As far as the economic question is concerned, it has to be solved in any case. Today there is gross economic inequality. The basis of Socialism is economic equality. There can be no Ramarajya in the present state of iniquitous inequalities in which a few roll in riches and the masses do not get even enough to eat. I accepted the theory of Socialism even while I was in South Africa. My opposition to the Socialists and others consists in attacking violence as a means of effecting any lasting reform.

Harijan, 1-6-'47, p. 172.

THE DOCTRINE OF STEWARDSHIP AND SELF-HELP

(Originally appeared in the columns of "Question Box" under the caption of "Benevolent Dictatorship")

Q. When the rich become callous and selfish and the evil continues unchecked, a revolution of the masses with all the attendant horrors inevitably results. Since life, as you have put it, is often a choice between evils, won't you in view of the lesson which the history of revolution inculcates, welcome the rise of a benevolent dictatorship which would with the minimum use of force "soak the rich", give justice to the poor, and thereby serve both?

A. I cannot accept benevolent or any other dictatorship. Neither will the rich vanish nor will the poor be protected. Some rich men will certainly be killed out and some poor men will be spoon-fed. As a class the rich will remain and the poor also, in spite of dictatorship labelled benevolent. The real remedy is non-violent democracy, otherwise spelt true education of all. The rich should be taught the doctrine of stewardship and the poor that of self-help.

Harijan, 8-6-'40, p. 159.

BOLSHEVISM

(From "The Students' Interrogatives")

Q. What is your opinion about the social economics of Bolshevism and how far do you think they are fit to be copied by our country?

A. I must confess that I have not yet been able fully to understand the meaning of Bolshevism. All that I know is that it aims at the abolition of the institution of private property. This is only an application of the ethical ideal of non-possession in the realm of economics and if the people adopted this ideal of their own accord or could be made to accept it by means of peaceful persuasion there

would be nothing like it. But from what I know of Bolshevism it not only does not preclude the use of force but freely sanctions it for the expropriation of private property and maintaining the collective State ownership of the same. And if that is so, I have no hesitation in saying that the Bolshevik regime in its present form cannot last for long. For it is my firm conviction that nothing enduring can be built on violence. But be that as it may, there is no questioning the fact that the Bolshevik ideal has behind it the purest sacrifice of countless men and women who have given up their all for its sake, and an ideal that is sanctified by the sacrifices of such master spirits as Lenin cannot go in vain, the noble example of their renunciation will be emblazoned for ever and quicken and purify the ideal as time passes.

Young India, 15-11-'28, p. 381

32

MEANING OF BOLSHEVISM

[The following has been received from Mr. M. N. Roy in reply to my article on Bolshevism. I gladly publish it, but I cannot help saying that if Mr. Roy's article is a correct representation of Bolshevism, it is a poor thing. I can no more tolerate the yoke of Bolshevism as described by Mr. Roy than of capitalism. I believe in conversion of mankind, not its destruction, and for a very obvious reason. We are all very imperfect and weak things and, if we are to destroy all whose ways we do not like, there will be not a man left alive. Mobocracy is autocracy multiplied million times. But I hope, I am almost sure, that real Bolshevism is much better than Mr. M. N. Roy's. — M. K. G.]

Some of his American friends wrote Mahatma Gandhi that, in the name of religion, he was probably introducing Bolshevism into India. These gratuitous 'friends' obviously taking their cue from the spokesmen of Anglo-Saxon Imperialism (who often masquerade as pacifists), depict

the revolt of the Moslem peoples as a menace to the world, because this revolt is supported by Bolshevik Russia. It should have been very simple for Mahatmaji to give a fitting reply to this impudent communication. He could have told his 'responsible (?) foreign friends' that the Moslem peoples have legitimate reason to revolt, and that any political doctrine or government supporting this revolt is to be considered favourably by all apostles of freedom. Besides, he could have requested his American friends to get busy at home, if they sincerely dreaded any menace to the world. What is menacing the world more today than American Imperialism? Is the revolt of the Moslem people more sinister than the Ku Klux Klan and the American Legion? Is Bolshevist atheism more godless than the anti-Asiatic spirit of the American democracy?

The Mahatma, however, did not give such a direct answer. He preferred to justify himself — to absolve himself from any possible suspicion of Bolshevist tendency. But the curious thing is, that although by his own confession, he did not know anything about Bolshevism, nevertheless he was extremely solicitous to disown any leaning towards it, so sure is his instinctive antipathy for it. In an article in *Young India*, he writes: "In the first place I must confess that I do not know the meaning of Bolshevism." This is indeed a very damaging confession, in view of the fact that it is made by one standing at the head of a great popular movement. The Mahatma said in the same article, that he knew that there were two opposite pictures of Bolshevism, "one painting it in the blackest colour, the other hailing it as a deliverance for the downtrodden masses all over the world". But he does not know what to believe. Here again he could follow a simple human course. He could easily find out who paints the first picture. It is done by those who are ruling over the world with the policy of blood and iron. In deference to his scruples of impartiality he might not believe those giving the second picture; but certainly Mahatmaji does not need to be convinced that the first party is not the friend or deliverer of

the human race. Therefore when they depict a thing in the blackest colour, the oppressed section of humanity can instinctively sense some sinister motive, they feel that the 'blackest colour' is for deceiving them. By this unerring instinct, the Indian nationalists during the war used to read two German victories in the place of each allied victory cabled by Reuter, and the Mexican peon calls himself proudly a Bolshevik, for the simple reason that the American capitalists are so much against Bolshevism. But I suppose, the mentality of a Mahatma is too complicated an organism to admit of such a simple instinctive process.

Since the deplorable ignorance of Bolshevism is not the Mahatma's alone but is shared by many in India, and since this ignorance does not preclude them from forming an opinion on the subject, it may not be uncalled for to say a few words about this 'monstrous' doctrine. It is the more called for, in view of the fact that Bolshevism (which by the way, is not the result, as is commonly believed, but the basic principle of the Russian Revolution of 1917) is the most dominant political factor of the contemporary world. Just as the great French Revolution of 1789 affected the political thought and life of Europe at that epoch, the Russian Revolution is bound to play the same role in our time, with the difference that the geographical situation of Russia, coupled with the principles of her revolution, will bring wider spheres, including Asia and Africa, under its sway. This is the case, despite the explicable apprehension and righteous indignation of the pacifically minded ladies and gentlemen, whose good faith is taken for granted by Mahatmaji, but is seriously doubted by more practical men of the world.

Now, as far as Mahatmaji is concerned, the main principles of Bolshevism will not be anything new. He himself will think so. But principles become a bundle of dead formulas if they are not put into action. By his own declaration, the Mahatma desires to see the masses freed from the domination of capitalism. Well, Bolshevism does not pro-

pose anything more monstrous. The Bolshevists are generally in agreement with Mahatmaji when he says: "The greatest menace to the world today is the growing, exploiting, irresponsible Imperialism which is threatening the independent existence and expansion of the weaker races." But the difference between the Mahatmaji and the Bolsheviki is that in the hands of the former, this gospel of freedom loses all practical value, being subordinated to an intricate conception of morality, religion and God, while the latter do not permit their vision to be clouded by illusions, and deal with the world as it is. The result is, that while Bolshevism forges ahead, breaking one link after another of the mighty chain of time-honoured servitude, in the face of united and determined opposition of the powers that be, Gandhism gropes in the dark, spinning out ethical and religious dogmas, that only prevent the masses from developing the will to fight for freedom.

It can be taken for granted that Mahatmaji is acquainted with the general principles of Socialism; not the Utopian brand of St. Simon, Thomas More, Tolstoy etc., but that formulated on the basis of scientific knowledge and economic facts, by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. The principles of Socialism are: (1) to overthrow the capitalist system of production; (2) abolition of private property; (3) re-organization of the means of social production and distribution on the basis of communal ownership and (4) transformation of the class-ridden society into a human fraternity. These are also the principles of Bolshevism, the latter being Socialism in its militant and initial stages of victory.

The term 'Bolshevism', which has come to be associated with bloodshed, destruction, terror and what not, is very harmless in its meaning. It is derived from the Russian word *bolsheviki*, which is the synonym for adherents of the majority. The term was first used when the Russian Socialist Democratic Labour Party split in 1903 into two factions, on the question of programme and tactics. The programme and tactics advocated by the majority led by Lenin

together with others, came to be known as Bolshevism ; and since the Russian proletariat scored the victory in October 1917, having fought according to the programme and tactics advocated by the majority of the party ever since 1903, the October Revolution is called a Bolshevik victory, which means the first triumph of Socialism. What are the concrete results of the Russian Revolution ? (1) A corrupt, irresponsible despotism was overthrown. (2) The bourgeoisie, which under the guise of democracy, sought in conjunction with foreign powers to deprive the Russian masses of the benefits of the Revolution, was also overthrown. (3) The landed aristocracy, the mainstay of the Czarist despotism, was destroyed, land declared to be property of the entire nation and distributed among the cultivators. (4) Large industries were nationalized. (5) Foreign trade made a State monopoly. (6) All legislative and administrative power was transferred to the overwhelming majority of the people, namely the workers, peasants and soldiers, who exercised this power through their councils (Soviets). (7) All right of private property and the class privilege accruing therefrom was abolished. These in general are the principles of Bolshevism, applied practically in Russia in consequence of the Revolution. Now that he knows what Bolshevism is, what is the attitude of the Mahatma towards it? It will be interesting for India, as well as the whole world, to know the reply.

Now comes the thorny question. Mahatmaji might not take exception to these principles but he would certainly make many a stipulation as to the method of realizing them. For him there is only one touch-stone for everything. If Bolshevism is atheistic, he is against it. That is all. Well, there we have given him a definition of Bolshevism in a nutshell. It is for him to pronounce whether it is a negation of God or what. He cannot maintain that it is a negation of God, unless he holds private property and vested interests to be a divine ordinance, because Bolshevism is certainly a negation of private property and vested interests, which from the dawn of civilization, have been

the curse of human society. In the practical programme of Bolshevism there is no question of God or religion. It is neither theistic nor atheistic. It concerns the worldly life of man. The possible conflict with God and religion occurs only when the latter stand in the way ; when the conception of God or religion clashes with this practical programme. In that case Bolshevism does not hesitate to take up the challenge even of the supposed almighty, and become atheistic, thus running the risk of forfeiting the approbation of the Mahatma. But by doing so, it not only becomes the champion of the material rights of the masses, but holds up as well the torch of intellectual and spiritual emancipation, to dissipate the gloom of ignorance and superstition in which the masses have been kept for ages by the dominating class.

The programme of Bolshevism, which Mahatmaji cannot deny to be humanitarian (unless he chooses to take up openly the cause of the upper class), is, however, not easily put into practice. The reign of terror and devastating civil war, that undeniably took place in Russia after the Revolution, owe their origin to the fact that a brutal resistance was put up to prevent the realization of this programme. Not only the Russian aristocracy and bourgeoisie, who naturally frantically tried to regain their lost position, put up this resistance ; they were openly backed by the international bourgeoisie, who saw in the Russian Revolution the first breach in their citadel. A part of this ceaseless campaign was the picturing of Bolshevism in the darkest colours, which did not altogether fail to impress even the Mahatma. Now what were Bolsheviks to do in that situation ? There were two alternatives : to call upon the Russian workers and peasants to be God-fearing and meekly slip back into the bondage they had so heroically broken, or to keep on fighting even against God and religion, if they stood in the way, to protect and consolidate the freedom won. Bolshevism was obliged to accept the second alternative, because not only all available material forces were concentrated in order to force the Russian workers and peasants back

under the capitalist and Czarist tyranny ; all the arms of God and religion were also mobilized for the same purpose. Bolshevism is not a gospel of God : Bolsheviks are not angels. But neither is Bolshevism the spirit of demons. The Mahatma proposes "to touch the masses through their hearts, their better nature". It is a fascinating proposition, to which Bolshevism would not object, had it been found workable in the practice of liberating the masses from class domination and imperialist oppression. His theory of 'discipline' is also very questionable. It may be good for the spiritual well-being of the masses but it certainly weakens their will to fight for freedom. All these doctrines about 'heart', 'better nature' 'discipline' and the like have been adumbrated from time immemorial, by those who were the (perhaps unconscious) instruments of class domination. Bolshevism does not shirk any task, however, disagreeable or difficult it may be. It challenges the existence of God, and denounces all the codes of religion and ethics originating therefrom, because in the struggle for freedom they are all found arrayed on the side of despotism, tyranny and oppression.

Bolshevism is prepared to leave God alone, if He and His agents on earth agree not to meddle in things temporal. But if they do not agree to be satisfied with their super-material position and seek to make trouble on earth, Bolshevism will preach atheism to liberate the masses from the snare of ignorance woven by religion.

M. N. Roy

Young India, 1-1-'25, p. 5.

THE YOUNG COMMUNISTS' CATECHISM

(From the "London Letter" by M. D.)

Mrs. Naidu, who has in her somewhat of the ancient Roman dames' love for gladiatorial combats no less than their proverbial pride in their young children, introduced to Gandhiji the other day, a group of young Indian Communists headed by Baba, her youngest son. Naturally, she was made by Gandhiji to preside over the bloodless tournament that she had arranged.

Earnest Seekers

These young men were all more or less exiles from their mother country and were dreadfully in earnest. I think, they all greatly loved Gandhiji and could not understand how, with his passion for social justice and concern for the poor, he could possibly help not sharing their theories. 'We have often experienced difficulty in understanding your language,' began Baba, 'for you are not only moulding a nation but the English tongue too and we very often find that when you mean one thing, people understand it in a different sense altogether. We have, therefore, come to see whether we cannot discover a common ground behind our apparent differences.' With this they took up a formidable array of questions which they had left with Gandhiji a few days back. Some of these questions and Gandhiji's answers are given below :

Position of Privileged Classes

The first question was :

'How exactly do you think the Indian princes, landlords, mill-owners and money-lenders and other profiteers are enriched ?'

'At the present moment by exploiting the masses,' was Gandhiji's reply.

'Can these classes be enriched without the exploitation of the Indian workers and peasants?' they next asked.

‘To a certain extent, yes,’ Gandhiji replied.

‘Have these classes any social justification to live more comfortably than the ordinary worker and peasant who does the work which provides the wealth?’

‘No justification,’ replied Gandhiji categorically. ‘My idea of society is,’ he proceeded to explain, ‘that while we are born equal, meaning that we have a right to equal opportunity, all have not the same capacity. It is, in the nature of things, impossible. For instance, all cannot have the same height, or colour or degree of intelligence etc. Therefore, in the nature of things, some will have ability to earn more and others less. People with talents will have more, and they will utilize their talents for this purpose. If they utilize their talents kindly, they will be performing the work of the State. Such people exist as trustees, on no other terms. I would allow a man of intellect to earn more, I would not cramp his talent. But the bulk of his greater earnings must be used for the good of the State, just as the income of all earning sons of the father goes to the common family fund. They would have their earnings only as trustees. It may be that I would fail miserably in this. But that is what I am sailing for. And that is what is implied in the Declaration of Fundamental Rights too.’

Class War

This led on to a discussion of ‘class war’ as means for bringing about the desired transformation of the privileged classes.

Q. Don’t you think that the peasants and workers are justified in carrying on a class war for economic and social emancipation so that they can be free once and for all from the burden of supporting parasitic classes in society?

A. No. I myself am carrying on a revolution on their behalf. But it is a non-violent revolution.

Q. By your movement for the reduction of rents in the U. P. you may ameliorate the condition of the peasants, but you do not strike at the root of the system.

A. Yes. But you can't do everything at one and the same time.

Q. How then will you bring about trusteeship? Is it by persuasion?

A. Not merely by verbal persuasion. I will concentrate on my means. Some have called me the greatest revolutionary of my time. It may be false, but I believe myself to be a revolutionary—a non-violent revolutionary. My means are non-co-operation. No person can amass wealth without the co-operation, willing or forced, of the people concerned.

Privileged Classes as Trustees

That, however, did not quite satisfy them. They challenged the very basis of existing privileges which certain classes at present enjoy. 'Who constituted the capitalists trustees? Why are they entitled to commission, and how will you fix the commission?' they asked. 'They will be entitled to a commission,' explained Gandhiji, 'because money is in their possession. Nobody constituted them trustees. I am inviting them to act as trustees. I am inviting those people who consider themselves as owners today to act as trustees, i.e. owners, not in their own right, but owners, in the right of those whom they have exploited. I will not dictate to them what commission to take, but ask them to take what is fair, e.g. I would ask a man who possesses Rs. 100 to take Rs. 50 and give the other Rs. 50 to the workers. But to him who possesses Rs. 1,00,00,000 I would perhaps say, take 1 per cent for yourself. So you see that my commission would not be a fixed figure because that would result in atrocious injustice.'

Individual v. the System

The next set of questions related to Gandhiji's attitude towards a crusade against the Indian capitalists and zamindars, and enabled him to explain the necessity of observing the distinction between the system and the

man. It also enabled him to set forth his concrete agrarian and economic programme. 'The maharajas and landlords,' they said, 'sided with the British. But, you find your support in the masses. The masses, however, see in them their enemy. What would be your attitude if the masses decided the fate of these classes when they are in power?'

'The masses do not today see in landlords and other profiteers their enemy,' Gandhiji replied. 'But the consciousness of the wrong done to them by these classes has to be created in them. I do not teach the masses to regard the capitalists as their enemies, but I teach them that they are their own enemies. Non-co-operators never told the people that the British or General Dyer were bad, but that they were the victims of a system. So that the system must be destroyed and not the individual. That is the reason why British officials can live with impunity in population so fired with the desire for freedom.'

'If you want to attack a system,' they again asked, resuming their broadside, 'there can be no difference between an Indian capitalist and an English capitalist. Why do you not apply non-payment of taxes to zamindars?'

'A zamindar is merely a tool of a system,' answered Gandhiji. 'It is not necessary to take a movement against him at the same time as against the British system. It is possible to distinguish between the two. But, we had to tell the people not to pay to the zamindars, because, out of this money the zamindars paid to the Government. But we have no quarrel with the zamindars as such, so long as they act well by the tenants.'

Concrete Agrarian Programme

Q. What is your concrete programme to put the peasant and worker in absolute power to decide his own destiny?

A. My programme is the programme I am working out through the Congress. I am convinced that as a result of it their position today is infinitely superior to what they

had occupied within living memory. I don't now refer to their material condition. I refer to the immense awakening that has come among them and the consequent ability to resist injustice and exploitation.

Q. How do you propose to relieve the peasantry of their debt of five hundred crores ?

A. No one knows the exact amount of debt. Such as it is, if the Congress gets the power, the Congress will undertake the scrutiny of the so-called obligations of the peasantry as it insists with regard to the obligations of the incoming Indian Government to be taken over from the outgoing alien Government.

Young India, 26-11-'31, p. 367 at p. 368.

34

LAY NOT AN EMBARGO ON YOUR REASON

(Originally appeared under the title "A Word to the Communists")

[Addressing a labour meeting in Bombay which was disturbed by some young Communists, Gandhiji made a Hindi speech of which the following is a condensed translation. — M. D.]

I knew that there were Communists in India, but I had not met them outside the Meerut Jail, nor even heard their speeches. I made a point of interviewing the Meerut prisoners two years ago during my tour in the U.P., and thus managed to know them somewhat. I have heard one of them this evening, and I may tell them that much as they may claim to win Swaraj for the working men, I have my doubts about their ability to do so. I have made the working men's cause my own long before any one of the young Communists here were born. I spent the best part of my time in South Africa working for them. I used to live with them, and shared their joys and sorrows. You must, therefore, understand why I claim to speak for labour. I expect at least courtesy from you if nothing else. I invite you to come to me and discuss things with me as frankly as you can.

You claim to be Communists, but you do not seem to live the life of Communism. I may tell you that I am trying my best to live up to the ideal of Communism in the best sense of the term. And Communism does not, I fancy, exclude courtesy. I am amongst you today, within a few minutes I will leave you. But if you want to carry the country with you, you ought to be able to react on it by reasoning with it. You cannot do so by coercion. You may deal destruction to bring the country round to your view. But how many will you destroy ? Not tens of millions. You may kill a few thousands if you had millions with you. But today you are no more than a handful. I ask you to convert the Congress if you can and to take charge of it. But you cannot do so by bidding goodbye to the elementary rules of courtesy. And there is no reason why you should be lacking in ordinary courtesy, when it is open to you to give the fullest vent to your views, when India is tolerant enough to listen patiently to anyone who can talk coherently.

The truce has done no harm to the labourers. I claim that none of my activities has ever harmed the workers, can ever harm them. If the Congress sends its representatives to the conference, they will press for no Swaraj other than the Swaraj for workers and peasants. Long before the Communist party came into existence, the Congress had decided that that Swaraj would have no meaning which was not the Swaraj for workers and peasants. Perhaps, none of you workers here gets less than a monthly wage of Rs. 20, but I am working for winning Swaraj not only for you but for those toiling and unemployed millions who do not get even a square meal a day and have to scratch along with a piece of stale *roti* and a pinch of salt. But I do not want to deceive you, I must warn you that I do not bear any ill to the capitalists, I can think of doing them no harm. But I want, by means of suffering, to awaken them to their sense of duty, I want to melt their hearts and get them to render justice to their less fortunate brethren. They are human beings and my

appeal to them will not go in vain. The history of Japan reveals many an instance of self-sacrificing capitalists. During the last Satyagraha, quite a number of capitalists went in for considerable sacrifice, went to jail and suffered. Do you want to estrange them? Don't you want them to work with you for the common end?

You have asked me about the Meerut prisoners. I want you to know that I would release every convict from our prisons, if I had the power. But I could not in justice make their release a condition precedent for the settlement. I may tell you that I am striving my utmost to get them released, and if only you will decide to co-operate with me by creating a calm atmosphere we may be able to get all of them released, including even the Gadhwalis. You are talking of independence. Do not I want it as much as you? (Cries of 'substance of independence'.) Yes, I want substance and not shadow. For the present, I want you to cultivate a little patience and see what the Congress puts forward as its minimum when the time comes. I assure you we will repeat the Lahore Resolution at Karachi and if we chance to go to the Round Table Conference we will either return with what we want or with nothing at all.

'What about the eleven points?' you have asked me. They contain the substance of independence to my mind. Peasants and workingmen are well protected under them. But I could not repeat the points at the time of the settlement, for the simple reason that they were submitted, as an alternative to the launching of civil disobedience. We have now been through civil disobedience and if we are invited we have to go to the Round Table Conference to press our national demand. If we succeed there all the eleven points are secured. You may be sure that no Swaraj which does not satisfy the eleven points can be acceptable to me.

God has given you intellect and talent. Turn them to proper account. I beseech you not to lay an embargo on your reason. God help you.

Young India, 26-3-'31, p. 53.

FORMULA FOR COMMUNISTS

Q. How can we counteract the activities of the Communists, who are openly opposing the Congress?

A. The Communists seem to have made trouble-shooting their profession. I have friends among them. Some of them are like sons to me. But it seems they do not make any distinction between fair and foul, truth and falsehood. They deny the charge. But their reported acts seem to sustain it. Moreover, they seem to take their instructions from Russia, whom they regard as their spiritual home rather than India. I cannot countenance this dependence on an outside power. I have even said that we should not depend even on Russian wheat in our present food crisis. We must have the ability and courage to subsist on what our soil can give us rather than depend on foreign charity. Otherwise, we shall not deserve to exist as an independent country. The same applies to foreign ideologies. I would accept them only to the extent that I can assimilate them and adapt them to the Indian scene. But I must refuse to go under them.

My formula for the Communists, therefore, is that I would prefer to die at their hands, but I will not retaliate.

Harijan, 6-10-'46, pp. 338-339.

SECTION TWO : BREAD LABOUR

36

WHAT IS BREAD LABOUR ?

(From an article which originally appeared under the title "A Hotch-pot of Questions")

Q. "What is your view on what Tolstoy calls 'bread labour' ? Do you really earn your living by your bodily labour ? "

Strictly speaking bread labour is not a word of Tolstoy's coining. He took it from another Russian writer Bondaref, and it means that everyone is expected to perform sufficient body labour in order to entitle him to it. It is not therefore necessary to earn one's living by bread labour, taking the word living in its broader sense. But everyone must perform some useful body labour. For me at the present moment spinning is the only body labour I give. It is a mere symbol. I do not give enough body labour. That is also one of the reasons why I consider myself as living upon charity. But I also believe that such men will have to be found in every nation who will give themselves body, soul and mind to it and for their sustenance throw themselves on the mercy of their fellow men, that is, on God.

Young India, 5-11-'25, p. 378.

DISCOVERY OF THE LAW OF "BREAD LABOUR"

(Originally appeared under the title "Bread Labour")

The law, that to live man must work, first came home to me upon reading Tolstoy's writing on "bread labour". But even before that I had begun to pay homage to it after reading Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. The divine law, that man must earn his bread by labouring with his own hands, was first stressed by a Russian writer named T. M. Bondaref. Tolstoy advertised it and gave it wide publicity. In my view the same principle has been set forth in the third chapter of the Gita, where we are told, that he who eats without offering sacrifice eats stolen food. Sacrifice here can only mean bread labour.

Reason too leads us to an identical conclusion. How can a man, who does not do body labour, have the right to eat? 'In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread', says the Bible. A millionaire cannot carry on for long, and will soon get tired of his life, if he rolls in his bed all day long, and is even helped to his food. He, therefore, induces hunger by exercise and helps himself to the food he eats. If everyone, whether rich or poor, has thus to take exercise in some shape or form, why should it not assume the form of productive, i.e. bread labour? No one asks the cultivator to take breathing exercise or to work his muscles. And more than nine-tenths of humanity lives by tilling the soil. How much happier, healthier and more peaceful would the world become, if the remaining tenth followed the example of the overwhelming majority, at least to the extent of labouring enough for their food! And many hardships, connected with agriculture, would be easily redressed, if such people took a hand in it. Again invidious distinctions of rank would be abolished, when everyone without exception acknowledged the obligation of bread labour. It is common to all the *varnas*. There is a world-wide conflict between capital and labour, and the poor

envy the rich. If all worked for their bread, distinctions of rank would be obliterated ; the rich would still be there, but they would deem themselves only trustees of their property, and would use it mainly in the public interest.

Bread labour is a veritable blessing to one who would observe non-violence, worship truth, and make the observance of *brahmacharya* a natural act. This labour can truly be related to agriculture alone. But at present at any rate, everybody is not in a position to take to it. A person can therefore spin or weave, or take up carpentry or smithery, instead of tilling the soil, always regarding agriculture however to be the ideal. Everyone must be his own scavenger. Evacuation is as necessary as eating ; and the best thing would be for everyone to dispose of his own waste. If this is impossible, each family should see to its own scavenging. I have felt for years, that there must be something radically wrong, where scavenging has been made the concern of a separate class in society. We have no historical record of the man, who first assigned the lowest status to this essential sanitary service. Whoever he was, he by no means did us a good. We should, from our very childhood, have the idea impressed upon our minds that we are all scavengers, and the easiest way of doing so is, for everyone who has realized this, to commence bread labour as a scavenger. Scavenging, thus intelligently taken up, will help one to a true appreciation of the equality of man.

From Yeravda Mandir, Chap. IX.

THE TEACHINGS OF “ UNTO THIS LAST ”

(From Chapter XVIII entitled “ The Magic Spell of a Book ” in Part IV of *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* * by Gandhiji)

“ ...I left for Natal. I had taken Mr. Polak † into my fullest confidence. He came to see me off at the station, and left with me a book to read during the journey, which he said I should be sure to like. It was Ruskin’s *Unto This Last*.

The book was impossible to lay aside, once I had begun it. It gripped me. Johannesburg to Durban was a twenty-four hours’ journey. The train reached there in the evening. I could not get any sleep that night. I determined to change my life in accordance with the ideals of the book.

This was the first book of Ruskin I had ever read. During the days of my education, I had read practically nothing outside text-books, and after I launched into active life I had very little time left me for reading. I cannot therefore claim much book knowledge. However, I believe I have not lost much because of this enforced restraint. On the contrary, the limited reading may be said to have enabled me thoroughly to digest what I did read. Of these books, the one that brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation in my life was *Unto This Last*. I translated it later into Gujarati entitling it *Sarvodaya* (the welfare of all).

I believe that I discovered some of my deepest convictions reflected in this great book of Ruskin, and that is why it so captured me and made me transform my life. A poet is one who can call forth the good latent in the human breast. Poets do not influence all alike, for everyone is not evolved in an equal measure.

* Published by the Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad-14, price Rs. 3, postage etc. Re. 1.44.

† Mr. H. S. L. Polak, an associate of Gandhiji in South African Satyagraha.

The teachings of *Unto This Last* I understood to be :

1. That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
2. That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's, inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.
3. That a life of labour, i.e. the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living.

The first of these I knew. The second I had dimly realized. The third had never occurred to me. *Unto This Last* made it as clear as daylight for me that the second and the third were contained in the first. I arose with the dawn, ready to reduce these principles to practice.

39

THE GOLDEN RULE OF BREAD LABOUR

(From "Weekly Letter" by M. D.)

Some of the simplest things that Gandhiji has been saying and writing seem to puzzle and perplex people who ask him to explain what he could possibly have meant. One of these is Gandhiji's insistence on bread labour. It is the simplest of propositions to understand that if everyone earned his bread by the sweat of his brow there would be no exploitation and no overwork. But the puzzle to some is that most people do not do so. The lawyer who earns his thousands a month and guineas an hour does no body labour, nor do many other professional people of his kind. But says Gandhiji to the puzzled one : "Why worry about those who do not do body labour ? I have never imagined that every man on earth will earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, but I have simply enunciated the golden rule. Are you prepared to do it ? If you are, you need not be jealous of the man who is not prepared to do it or cannot do it. I may not be able to earn what fruit and milk I eat by mere body labour, but that means that I am to be pitied,

the rule is not affected. Only a few people can observe *brahmacharya*, but should they, therefore, be jealous of the millions who cannot? The latter may be pitied, rather than be envied."

Next there is the example of one who wants to observe the rule but whose flesh is weak. He is feeling very miserable and asks what he is to do. To him Gandhiji says: "I have indicated the ideal to work up to. Let everyone try to observe it as best as one can. Don't worry because you are incapable of doing any body labour. Do whatever other clean labour you can, and be sure that you do not exploit those that labour for you. Do not worry about the doctors and the rest who in your opinion seem to have no time for body labour. When they will practise their professions in a pure spirit of service to the community, the community will take care to see that they are not starved."

Harijan, 3-8-'35, p. 196 at p. 197.

DUTY OF BREAD LABOUR

"Brahma created his people with the duty of sacrifice laid upon them and said, 'By this do you flourish. Let it be the fulfiller of all your desires.'...He who eats without performing this sacrifice eats stolen bread," — thus says the Gita. 'Earn thy bread by the sweat of thy brow' says the Bible. Sacrifices may be of many kinds. One of them may well be bread labour. If all laboured for their bread and no more, then there would be enough food and enough leisure for all. Then there would be no cry of over-population, no disease and no such misery as we see around. Such labour will be the highest form of sacrifice. Men will no doubt do many other things either through their bodies or through their minds, but all this will be labour of love, for the common good. There will then be no rich and no poor, none high and none low, no touchable and no untouchable.

This may be an unattainable ideal. But we need not, therefore, cease to strive for it. Even if without fulfilling the whole law of sacrifice, that is, the law of our being, we performed physical labour enough for our daily bread, we should go a long way towards the ideal.

If we did so, our wants would be minimized, our food will be simple. We should then eat to live, not live to eat. Let anyone who doubts the accuracy of this proposition try to sweat for his bread, he will derive the greatest relish from the productions of his labour, improve his health and discover that many things he took, were superfluities.

May not men earn their bread by intellectual labour? No. The needs of the body must be supplied by the body. "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's" perhaps applies here well.

Mere mental, that is, intellectual labour is for the soul and is its own satisfaction. It should never demand payment. In the ideal state, doctors, lawyers and the like will work solely for the benefit of society, not for self. Obedience to the law of bread labour will bring about a silent revolution in the structure of society. Man's triumph will consist in substituting the struggle for existence by the struggle for mutual service. The law of the brute will be replaced by the law of man.

Return to the villages means a definite, voluntary recognition of the duty of bread labour and all it connotes. But says the critic, "Millions of India's children are today living in the villages and yet they are living a life of semi-starvation." This, alas, is but too true. Fortunately we know that theirs is not voluntary obedience. They would perhaps shirk body labour if they could, and even rush to the nearest city if they could be accommodated in it. Compulsory obedience to a master is a state of slavery, willing obedience to one's father is the glory of sonship. Similarly compulsory obedience to the law of bread labour breeds poverty, disease and discontent. It is a state of slavery. Willing obedience to it must bring contentment

and health. And it is health which is real wealth, not pieces of silver and gold. The Village Industries Association is an experiment in willing bread labour.

Harijan, 29-6-'35, p. 156.

41

NECESSITY OF BODILY LABOUR

(Originally appeared in the columns of "Notes")

A vigilant friend writes :

"In your address to the Jamshedpur gathering published in *Young India* of the 20th August, in the first paragraph, after stressing the importance of bodily labour above intellectual, you are reported to have said: "The same thought runs throughout Hindu religion. 'He who eats without labour eats sin, is verily a thief.'" This is the literal meaning of a verse in the Bhagavad Gita. Now, the question apart whether the Gita makes any such distinction between (so-called) manual and (so-called) intellectual labour, I can say that the only passage in the Gita which could conceivably be taken to mean what (according to the report) you have said a verse in the Gita literally means is the passage, Ch. 3, Verses 12 and 13; so that in the first place it is not a verse, but two, which have been requisitioned in support of your view of 'labour', and secondly, there is no mention of 'labour' manual or other in either of those verses; but in the first verse there is mentioned, by way of explanation of the duty of *yajna*, man's partaking with or dedicating to the higher powers what they have bestowed upon him — failing in which 'he is verily a thief,' — and in the second verse we are told that 'they eat sin who cook for themselves alone.' So that is pretty far removed from 'the literal sense of a verse' in the Gita, as you are reported to have given it in your own paper by M. D. I hope you will make a note of it at your convenience."

Technically speaking the writer is correct in saying that the translation given by M. D. is not of one verse but a combination of parts of two verses, and I am thankful to the writer for the accuracy of his correction. But the substance of his argument seems to me to be that there is no warrant for the translation given in the report of my speech of the famous word *yajna* in the Gita. But I propose

to stand by that translation and venture to suggest that in the verses 12 and 13 of Chapter III quoted by the writer, the word is capable of only one meaning. The fourteenth verse makes it absolutely clear which means :

“ By food the living live ; food comes of rain,
And rain comes by the pious sacrifice,
And sacrifice is paid with tithes of toil.”

— Arnold

Here, therefore, there is not only the theory, in my opinion, of bodily labour propounded, but there is also the theory established of labour not only for oneself but for others, when and when only it becomes *yajna* or sacrifice. The rains come not through intellectual feats but through sheer bodily labour. It is a well-established scientific fact that where forests are denuded of trees rains cease, where trees are planted rains are attracted and the volume of water received increases with the increase of vegetation. Laws of nature are still unexplored. We have but scratched the surface. Who knows all the ill effects moral and physical of the cessation of bodily labour ? Let me not be misunderstood. I do not discount the value of intellectual labour, but no amount of it is any compensation for bodily labour which everyone of us is born to give for the common good of all. It may be, often is, infinitely superior to bodily labour, but it never is or can be a substitute for it, even as intellectual food though far superior to the grains we eat never can be a substitute for them. Indeed without the products of the earth, those of the intellect would be an impossibility.”

Young India, 15-10-'25, p. 355.

OBLIGATION OF BREAD LABOUR

(From "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary")

Gandhiji in the course of his prayer speech set himself to answering the questions put to him.

You have always been against charity and have preached the doctrine that no man is free from the obligation of bread labour. What is your advice for people who are engaged in sedentary occupations but lost their all in the last riots? Should they migrate and try to find a place where they can go back to their old, accustomed habits of life or should they try to remodel their life in conformity with your ideal of bread labour for everybody? What use shall their special talents be in that case?

In reply Gandhiji said that it was true that for years he had been against charity as it was understood and that he had for years preached the duty of bread labour. In this connection, he mentioned the visit he had received from the District Magistrate and Zaman Saheb along with a police officer. They wanted his opinion about giving doles to the refugees. They had already decided to put before them the work of the water hyacinth, the repair of roads, village reconstruction or straightening out their own plots of land or building on their lands. Those who did any one of these things had a perfect right to rations. He said that he liked the idea. But as a practical idealist, he would not take the refugees by storm. A variety of work should be put before the people and they should have one month's notice that if they made no choice of the occupations suggested nor did they suggest some other acceptable occupation but declined to do any work though their bodies were fit, they would be reluctantly obliged to tell the refugees that they would not be able to give them doles after the expiry of the notice. He advised the refugees and their friends to render full co-operation to the Government in

such a scheme of work. It was wrong for any citizen to expect rations without doing some physical work.

He could never advise people to leave their homes. He would like even one solitary Hindu to feel safe under any circumstance and would expect the Muslims to make him perfectly safe in their midst. He should welcome them to worship God in the way they knew.

He certainly did not consider money got through speculation as rightly gained. Nor did he consider it impossible for men to shed bad or evil habits at any time. If everybody lived by the sweat of his brow, the earth would become a paradise. The question of the use of special talents hardly needed separate consideration. If everyone laboured physically for his bread, it followed that poets, doctors, lawyers, etc., would regard it their duty to use those talents gratis for the service of humanity. Their output will be all the better and richer for their selfless devotion to duty.

Harijan, 2-3-'47, p. 45 at p. 47.

43

BREAD LABOUR IN PRACTICE

(From "Ahimsa In Practice")

My experiments in Ahimsa have taught me that non-violence in practice means common labour with the body. A Russian philosopher, Bondaref, has called it bread labour. It means closest co-operation. The first Satyagrahis of South Africa laboured for the common good and the common purse and felt free like birds. They included Hindus, Muslims (Shias and Sunnis), Christians (Protestants and Roman Catholics), Parsis and Jews. They included the English and the Germans. By profession they were lawyers and architects, engineers, electricians, printers and traders. Practice of truth and non-violence melted religious differences, and we learnt to see beauty in each religion. I do

not remember a single religious quarrel in the two colonies I founded in South Africa. The common labour consisted of printing, carpentry, shoe-making, gardening, house-building and the like. Labour was no drudgery, it was a joy. The evenings were devoted to literary pursuits. These men, women and boys were the vanguard of the Satyagraha army. I could not wish for braver or more loyal comrades. In India the South African experience was continued and, I trust improved upon. Labour in Ahmedabad is by common consent the best organized in India. If it continues to work along the lines on which it began, it will ultimately own the mills in common with the present holders. If that is not the natural outcome, its non-violence will be found to contain flaws. The peasants of Bardoli who gave Vallabh-bhai the title of *Sardar* and won their battle, and of Borsad and Kheda who did likewise, have for years been working the constructive programme. They have not deteriorated as Satyagrahis by working it. I am quite certain that Ahmedabad labour and the peasantry of Bardoli and Kheda will give as good an account of themselves as any other in India if there is civil resistance.

Thirty-four years of continuous experience and experimenting in truth and non-violence have convinced me that non-violence cannot be sustained unless it is linked to conscious body labour and finds expression in our daily contact with our neighbours. This is the constructive programme. It is not an end, it is an indispensable means and therefore is almost convertible with the end. The power of non-violent resistance can only come from honest working of the constructive programme.

Harijan, 27-1-'40, p. 428 at p. 429.

MY BREAD LABOUR

(Some questions and answers thereto from "A Hotch-pot of Questions" are reproduced here)

I have got some taxing readers of *Young India* who often ask inconvenient questions. But as they please them I must suffer the inconvenience and answer their questions....

Q. You say you live, in common with other fellow workers, on the charity of friends who defray the expenses of Sabarmati Satyagrahashram. Do you think it proper for an institution of able-bodied men to live on the charity of friends?

A. The correspondent has taken the word 'charity' too literally. Let him understand that every member of the institution gives both his or her body and mind to its work. But the institution can still be said to live on the charity of friends, because the latter get no return for their donations. The fruits of the labour of the inmates go to the nation.

Q. What is your view on what Tolstoy calls 'Bread Labour'? Do you really earn your living by your bodily labour?

A. Strictly speaking bread labour is not a word of Tolstoy's coining. He took it from another Russian writer Bondaref and it means that everyone is expected to perform sufficient body labour in order to entitle him to it. It is not, therefore, necessary to earn one's living by bread labour, taking the word living in its broader sense. But everyone must perform some useful body labour. For me at the present moment spinning is the only body labour I give. It is a mere symbol. I do not give enough body labour. That is also one of the reasons why I consider myself as living upon charity. But I also believe that such men will have to be found in every nation who will give themselves body, soul and mind to it and for their sustenance throw themselves on the mercy of their fellow men, that is, on God.

Young India, 5-11-'25, p. 378.

THE PLACE OF BREAD LABOUR IN THE LIFE OF THE ASHRAM

(From *Ashram Observances in Action*,* translated from Gujarati
by V. G. D.)

The Ashram holds that every man and woman must work in order to live. This principle came home to me upon reading one of Tolstoy's essays. Referring to the Russian writer Bondaref, Tolstoy observes that his discovery of the vital importance of bread labour is one of the most remarkable discoveries of modern times. The idea is that every healthy individual must labour enough for his food and his intellectual faculties must be exercised not in order to obtain a living or amass a fortune but only in the service of mankind. If this principle is observed everywhere, all men would be equal, none would starve and the world would be saved from many a sin.

It is possible that this golden rule will never be observed by the whole world. Millions observe it in spite of themselves without understanding it. But their mind is working in a contrary direction, so that they are unhappy themselves and their labour is not as fruitful as it should be. This state of things serves as an incentive to those who understand and seek to practise the rule. By rendering a willing obedience to it they enjoy good health as well as perfect peace and develop their capacity for service.

Tolstoy made a deep impression on my mind, and even in South Africa I began to observe the rule to the best of my ability. And ever since the Ashram was founded, bread labour has been perhaps its most characteristic feature.

In my opinion, the same principle has been set forth in the third chapter of the Gita. I do not go so far as to say that the word *yajna* (sacrifice), there means body

* Published by the Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad-14, price Re. 1, postage etc. 31 nP.

labour. But when the Gita says that 'rain comes from sacrifice' (verse 14), I think it indicates the necessity of bodily labour. The 'residue of sacrifice' (verse 13) is the bread that we have won in the sweat of our brow. Labouring enough for one's food has been classed in the Gita as a *yajna*. Whoever eats more than is enough for sustaining the body is a thief, for most of us hardly perform labour enough to maintain themselves. I believe that a man has no right to receive anything more than his keep, and that everyone who labours is entitled to a living wage.

This does not rule out the division of labour. The manufacture of everything needed to satisfy essential human wants involves bodily labour, so that labour in all essential occupations counts as bread labour. But as many of us do not perform such labour, they have to take exercise in order to preserve their health. A cultivator working on his farm from day to day has not to take breathing exercise or work his muscles. Indeed if he observes the other laws of health, he would never be afflicted with illness.

God never creates more than what is strictly needed for the moment, with the result that if anyone appropriates more than he really needs, he reduces his neighbour to destitution. The starvation of people in several parts of the world is due to many of us seizing very much more than they need. We may utilize the gifts of nature just as we choose, but in her books the debits are always equal to the credits. There is no balance in either column.

This law is not invalidated by the fact that men raise bigger crops by mechanizing agriculture and using artificial fertilizers, and similarly increase the industrial output. This only means a transformation of natural energy. Try as we might, the balance is always nil.

Be that as it may, the observance best kept in the Ashram is that of bread labour, and no wonder. Its fulfilment is easy with ordinary care. For certain hours in the day, there is nothing to be done but work. Work is, therefore, bound to be put in. A worker may be lazy, inefficient

or inattentive, but he works for a number of hours all the same. Again certain kinds of labour are capable of yielding an immediate product and the worker cannot idle away a considerable amount of his time. In an institution where body labour plays a prominent part there are few servants. Drawing water, splitting firewood, cleaning and filling lamps with oil, sanitary service, sweeping the roads and houses, washing one's clothes, cooking—all these tasks must be performed without fail.

Besides this there are various activities carried on in the Ashram as a result of and in order to help fulfilment of the observances, such as agriculture, dairying, weaving, carpentry, tanning etc., which must be attended to by many members of the Ashram.

All these activities may be deemed sufficient for keeping the observance of bread labour, but another essential feature of *yajna* is the idea of serving others and the Ashram will perhaps be found wanting from this latter standpoint. The Ashram ideal is to live to serve. In such an institution there is no room for idleness or escaping duty, and everything should be done with right goodwill. If this was actually the case, the Ashram ministry would have been more fruitful than it is. But we are still very far from such a happy condition. Therefore although in a sense every activity in the Ashram is of the nature of *yajna*, it is compulsory for all to spin for at least one hour in the name of God incarnated as the Poor (Daridranarayana).

People often say that in an institution like the Ashram where body labour is given pride of place, there is no scope for intellectual development, but my experience is just the reverse. Everyone who has been to the Ashram has made intellectual progress also; I know of none who was the worse on account of a sojourn in the Ashram.

Intellectual development is often supposed to mean a knowledge of facts concerning the universe. I freely admit that such knowledge is not laboriously imparted to the

students in the Ashram. But if intellectual progress spells understanding and discrimination, there is adequate provision for it in the Ashram. Where body labour is performed for mere wages it is possible that the labourer becomes dull and listless. No one tells him how and why things are done ; he himself has no curiosity and takes no interest in his work. But such is not the case in the Ashram. Everything including sanitary service must be done intelligently, enthusiastically and for the love of God. Thus there is scope for intellectual development in all departments of Ashram activity. Everyone is encouraged to acquire full knowledge of his own subject. Anyone who neglects to do this must answer for it. Everyone in the Ashram is a labourer ; none is a wage-slave.

It is a gross superstition to imagine that knowledge is acquired only through books. We must discard this error. Reading books has a place in life, but is useful only in its own place. If book-knowledge is cultivated at the cost of body labour, we must raise a revolt against it. Most of our time must be devoted to body labour, and a little to reading. As in India today the rich and the so-called higher classes despise body labour, it is very necessary to insist on the dignity of labour. Even for real intellectual development one should engage in some useful bodily activity.

It is desirable if at all possible that the Ashram should give the workers some more time for reading. It is also desirable that illiterate Ashramites should have a teacher to help them in their studies. But it appears that time for reading and the like cannot be given at the cost of any of the present activities of the Ashram. Nor can we engage paid teachers, and so long as the Ashram cannot attract more men who are capable of teaching ordinary school subjects, we have to manage with as many such as we have got in our midst. The school and college-educated men who are in the Ashram have not still fully acquired the skill of correlating the three R's with body labour. This is a new experiment for all of us. But we shall learn

from experience, and those of us who have received ordinary education will by and by find out ways and means of imparting their knowledge to others.

Harijan, 14-11-'48, p. 310 and 28-11-'48, p. 327.

46

DIVORCE BETWEEN INTELLIGENCE AND LABOUR

(Extract from Chapter II, item 6, "Village Sanitation")

Divorce between intelligence and labour has resulted in criminal negligence of the villages. And so, instead of having graceful hamlets dotting the land, we have dung-heaps. The approach to many villages is not a refreshing experience. Often one would like to shut one's eyes and stuff one's nose, such is the surrounding dirt and offending smell. If the majority of Congressmen are derived from our villages as they should be, they should be able to make our villages models of cleanliness in every sense of the word. But they have never considered it their duty to identify themselves with the villagers in their daily lives. A sense of national or social sanitation is not a virtue among us. We may take a kind of a bath, but we do not mind dirtying the well or the tank or the river by whose side or in which we perform ablutions. I regard this defect as a great vice which is responsible for the disgraceful state of our villages and the sacred banks of the sacred rivers and for the diseases that spring from insanitation.

Constructive Programme (1941 Edn.) p. 12.

INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT OR DISSIPATION ?

(Translated from *Harijanbandhu* by Shri Pyarelal)

During my recent wanderings in Travancore and Madras I found that most of the students and 'intellectuals' who came into touch with me were an instance of intellectual dissipation rather than intellectual development. The fault lies in the modern system of education which encourages this vicious tendency, misdirects the mind, and thereby hinders its development instead of helping it. My experiments in Segaoon have only confirmed this impression. But they are as yet too incomplete to be cited as evidence. The views on education that I am now going to set forth have been held by me right from the time of the founding of the Phoenix settlement in South Africa in the year 1904.

I hold that true education of the intellect can only come through a proper exercise and training of the bodily organs, e.g. hands, feet, eyes, ears, nose etc. In other words an intelligent use of the bodily organs in a child provides the best and quickest way of developing his intellect. But unless the development of the mind and body goes hand in hand with a corresponding awakening of the soul, the former alone would prove to be a poor lop-sided affair. By spiritual training I mean education of the heart. A proper and all-round development of the mind, therefore, can take place only when it proceeds *pari passu* with the education of the physical and spiritual faculties of the child. They constitute an indivisible whole. According to this theory, therefore, it would be a gross fallacy to suppose that they can be developed piecemeal or independently of one another.

The baneful effects of absence of proper co-ordination and harmony among the various faculties of body, mind and soul respectively are obvious. They are all around us ;

only we have lost perception of them owing to our present perverse associations. Take the case of our village folk. From their childhood upward they toil and labour in their fields from morning till night like their cattle in the midst of whom they live. Their existence is a weary endless round of mechanical drudgery unrelieved by a spark of intelligence or higher graces of life. Deprived of all scope for developing their mind and soul, they have sunk to the level of the beast. Life to them is a sorry bungle which they muddle through any how. On the other hand what goes by the name of education in our schools and colleges in the cities today is in reality only intellectual dissipation. Intellectual training is there looked upon as something altogether unrelated to manual or physical work. But since the body must have some sort of physical exercise to keep it in health, they vainly try to attain that end by means of an artificial and otherwise barren system of physical culture which would be ridiculous beyond words if the result was not so tragic. The young man who emerges from this system can in no way compete in physical endurance with an ordinary labourer. The slightest physical exertion gives him a headache ; a mild exposure to the sun is enough to cause him giddiness. And what is more, all this is looked upon as quite 'natural'. As for the faculties of the heart, they are simply allowed to run to seed or to grow anyhow in a wild undisciplined manner. The result is moral and spiritual anarchy. And it is regarded as something laudable !

As against this, take the case of a child in whom the education of the heart is attended to from the very beginning. Supposing he is set to some useful occupation like spinning, carpentry, agriculture, etc. for his education and in that connection is given a thorough comprehensive knowledge relating to the theory of the various operations that he is to perform and the use and construction of the tools that he would be wielding. He would not only develop a fine, healthy body but also a sound, vigorous intellect that is not merely academic but is firmly rooted in and is

tested from day to day by experience. His intellectual education would include a knowledge of mathematics and the various sciences that are useful for an intelligent and efficient exercise of his avocation. If to this is added literature by way of recreation, it would give him a perfect well-balanced, all-round education in which the intellect, the body and the spirit have all full play and develop together into a natural, harmonious whole. Man is neither mere intellect, nor the gross animal body, nor the heart or soul alone. A proper and harmonious combination of all the three is required for the making of the whole man and constitutes the true economics of education. To say that this kind of education can only be given after we have attained our independence would, I am afraid, be like putting the cart before the horse. The advent of independence would be incredibly hastened if we could educate millions of our people through an intelligent exercise of their respective vocations like this and teach them that they live for the common good of all.

Harijan, 8-5-'37, p. 104.

48

INTELLIGENT BREAD LABOUR—THE HIGHEST FORM OF SOCIAL SERVICE

(Originally appeared under the title "Struggles of a Worker")

"I am conducting, with the co-operation of some comrades, an Ashram; its object is to so train ourselves as to be transformed into ideal peasants, so that we may be able to completely identify ourselves with village people and village society, and thus be able to serve them by being actually of them. With this end in view, agriculture has been taken up as the chief means of support with spinning and weaving as supplementary.

"After reaping our main crop, i.e. paddy, in January last, the Ashram has now taken to growing secondary crops such as sugarcane, *udad* and vegetables. From June last, that is from the date the Ashram was started, till today, nearly 2,60,000 yards of yarn of average 10 counts have been spun by the Ashram inmates, and from March last, a loom has been set up and weaving begun.

Carding is also done in the Ashram. Thus the Ashram has spun yarn sufficient to supply its modest clothing needs, and it is hoped that all the yarn will now be woven in the Ashram itself.

“Thus the Ashram has been during its first year, fairly successful in approaching the ideal of a self-supporting peasant family which supplies itself with almost all the necessities of life by its own labour and does not allow itself to be in the least exploited by the town.

“From the beginning the Ashram has been used to grinding its own flour. It has never made use of sugar. Now for the last three months or so, it is using exclusively unpolished rice, prepared in the Ashram by its inmates, out of the Ashram paddy.

“While starting the Ashram, it had been conceived that along with the working out of the ideal of ourselves living a self-supporting peasant life, we should also serve the villagers by doing Harijan work, by introducing spinning and in other possible ways. But we have been entirely disappointed in this respect, for we have not been as yet able to find a suitable locality for the Ashram. In the locality wherein the Ashram is at present situated, the hamlets consist of one or two houses; and these hamlets are separated from one another by a distance of from half a mile to one mile.

“Another thing that has seriously impeded the progress of the Ashram is that I committed grave blunders, as I now find them to be, in the matter of diet. In what now seems to be a mere over-enthusiasm for the ideal of poverty, the standard of diet was kept very low. The Ashram, for instance, did not even use vegetables regularly but only occasionally, because it had not yet grown its own vegetables. After two months or so, the mistake was rectified. Milk and milk products were considered a luxury, at least not consistent with a poor man's dietary, and hence not used. But it is only a week now that we have bought a cow and begun to take milk etc.; but up till that time we contented with using cocoanut oil as a substitute for *ghee*. It should also be noted that the staple food in this district is rice. All this has seriously crippled the health of the inmates. The Ashram started with twelve inmates; we are now only five. Moreover malaria has been telling upon the health of the inmates. This being a forest taluka is so to say the home of malaria, at least so far as the greater part of it is concerned.

“The Ashram has up till now stuck to the ideal of maintaining itself by manual labour. While this ideal, if intelligently worked out, must tend to strengthen our moral fibre and steady us in a life of principles, it has also resulted in keeping a few of our co-workers away from the Ashram. The problem is as to how, while keeping the ideal of bread labour intact, to draw in such workers as mentioned above within the orbit of the Ashram.

“ Friends and sympathizers as well as critics set this our insistence on the Tolstoyan idea of bread labour in opposition to the ideal of social service, and argue that the Ashram has thus deprived society of the benefits of the many services that the Ashram workers would have been otherwise in a position to render to it. How and when, if at all, can one be justified in compromising the principle of bread labour for the sake of rendering ‘social service’ ? Is not, most often, the conflict between ‘being’ and ‘doing’ only apparent and superficial, while in truth, ‘being’ is ‘doing’ in the real sense ? When can this principle of bread labour be said to be carried to the extreme, or be said to have been followed in the letter but broken in the spirit ?

“ Our expenses during eight months for seven inmates on an average have been :

				Rs.	As.	Ps.
Meals	..	..	..	171	8	9
Clothing	..	..	..	16	9	9
Lamp	..	..	..	8	10	0
Post	..	..	..	3	6	9
Miscellaneous	..	..	..	6	3	5
Medicine	..	..	..	7	12	3
Vessels	..	..	..	3	8	9
Papers (<i>Harijan</i>)	..	..	..	3	14	0
Travelling	..	..	..	10	2	3
Total Rs.				231	11	11

“ From this it will be found that the board per head per month has been Rs. 3/- and other expenses including clothing Re. 1/- per head per month.”

This is from a letter addressed to Shri Kishorlal Mashruwala by a highly educated selfless worker. It depicts the struggles of a sincere worker and is likely to help all who are trying to lead a life of service.

The effort is noble. The writer and his co-workers do not hesitate to own and mend mistakes when they discover any.

I do not know how Shri Kishorlal has answered the queries put by his correspondent. I must try to answer them in order to help the general reader who is interested in the questions of the type that puzzle the writer of the letter.

There seems to be some confusion about the principle of bread labour. It is never opposed to social service. Intelligent bread labour is any day the highest form of social service. For what can be better than that a man should by his personal labour add to the useful wealth of the country ? 'Being' is 'doing'.

The adjective 'intelligent' has been prefixed to 'labour' in order to show that labour to be social service must have that definite purpose behind it. Otherwise every labourer can be said to render social service. He does in a way, but what is meant here is something much more than that. A person who labours for the general good of all serves society and is worthy of his hire. Therefore, such bread labour is not different from social service. What the vast mass of mankind does for self or at best for family, a social servant does for general good. These seven members today find that they have hardly time left for service other than that of slaving for their daily bread. This need not be so if they were proficient in their work. In fact they are not. As field labourers, they are no match for the ordinary labourers. As artisans too they are novices. Every worker, thank God, now knows that with intelligent use of his tools a spinner can easily double his output in a given time. That means doubling the income from the wheel. This is true of most things. In agriculture, the field for development with the same tools is so vast that unless nature interferes, a farmer can by the use of his intelligence any day quadruple his income, working the same number of hours per day. This means that for the same amount of income he need not labour so much as he is now doing. These workers can, therefore, when they have acquired proficiency, earn their bread in much less time than they need now, and will have energy set free for special Harijan or other service. The problem becomes complicated for householders who have many calls on their purses, but a self-denying worker whose needs amount to Rs. 4 per month has any day ample time at his disposal for work beyond labour that would bring him Rs. 4 per month.

But will three rupees per month needed out of four for food give a person enough to feed himself? If Dr. Tilak's figure for Bombay, i.e. Rs. 5/- per month, is good, Rs. 3/- for village life is certainly good. And when I add my own experience to Dr. Tilak's prescription there is no difficulty. Dr. Tilak erases powdered milk from the village menu. But as he says there is no escape from milk. The inmates were wrong in eliminating milk from their dietary. It is true that millions get not a drop of milk. But they do not get many other things without which we dare not do if we are to live to serve. We must therefore take those bare necessities which we have to strive every villager to produce for himself. Whole cereal, whether wheat, rice, *bajri*, *juwar* or the like, green edible leaves uncooked, milk and any village fruit when in season as mango, *jamrood*, *jamun*, *ber*, etc., are indispensable for healthy life. The prince among edible leaves is perhaps *neem* leaf, to be had for the picking everywhere in India; and there are many edible grasses of which we have no knowledge. And tamarind fruit which is also obtainable everywhere is not to be despised. There is, however, a prejudice against tamarind which is difficult to understand. I have been using it liberally in the place of the expensive lemon with the greatest advantage. Diet reform is a limitless field of research, fraught with the greatest consequences for the world and more especially for the famishing millions of India. It means both health and wealth which according to Ruskin are one and the same thing. The members of the little Ashram are right in thinking that they will do the greatest social service by living right all along the line. They will infect their surroundings whose limit may in course of time be the whole of India and then the universe. In this service the welfare of one is the welfare of all.

Harijan, 1-6-'35 p. 124.

INTELLECTUAL AND MANUAL WORK

(Originally appeared in the columns of "Question Box")

Q. Why should we insist on a Rabindranath or Raman earning his bread by manual labour? Is it not sheer wastage? Why should not brain workers be considered on a par with manual workers, for both of them perform useful social work?

A. Intellectual work is important and has an undoubted place in the scheme of life. But what I insist on is the necessity of physical labour. No man, I claim, ought to be free from that obligation. It will serve to improve even the quality of his intellectual output. I venture to say that in ancient times, Brahmins worked with their body as with their mind. But even if they did not, body labour was a proved necessity at the present time. In this connection I would refer to the life of Tolstoy and how he made famous the theory of bread labour first propounded in his country by the Russian peasant Bondaref.

Harijan, 23-2-'47, p. 36.

LITERARY v. CRAFT WORK

(From "Notes" — adapted from *Harijanbandhu*)

Shri Narhari Parikh writes :

"I feel that in many of our Khadi and other schools, the emphasis laid on literary training is wholly wrong. Certain hours are assigned to craft work and certain to literary work, but it is believed that knowledge can only be imbibed through book reading. I hold that more intellectual progress is possible for our students through craft work than books. I shall be grateful if you will give your opinion on this issue."

The writer's complaint is justified. Literary training does not always mean expansion of the intellect. Primarily it is a matter of memorizing. A letter is imprinted on the brain in the same way as any other picture. But literary

training is more than mere reading. The same thing is true of handicrafts. A knowledge of handicrafts is not limited to the mere craft. It includes a knowledge of its science. Then the expansion of the intellect is much greater and quicker than in the high schools and colleges. Therefore, to run down craft work or give it a secondary place in the school programme is greatly to be deplored. Students thus under-rate the value and place of craft knowledge in the expansion of the intellect. Book learning damages the eyes and cramps thought and originality. There is no such danger in learning crafts and their science. This too involves some study of books. But that study is related to crafts and, therefore, requires the exertion of the intellect. This is what I mean by basic training. It must, in time, come into its own, for it is so true. But meanwhile let there be no differentiation made between book learning and craft work. The latter must be looked upon as an integral part of education and must have the same status as any other subject. This obvious truth should be recognized at least in national schools.

Harijan, 5-4-'42, p. 104 at p. 105.

51

NON-VIOLENT CRAFTS

(By M. D.)

The joint meeting of the A.I.S.A. and the Gandhi Seva Sangh that was held last June discussed several questions relating to a wider understanding of the economics of Khadi. At one sitting Gandhiji spoke at length about the non-violent aspect of the development of handicrafts. "As," he said, "a non-violent man's actions will all be coloured by non-violence, his occupational activity will necessarily be non-violent. Strictly speaking, no activity and no industry is possible without a certain amount of violence, no matter how little. Even the very process of living is impossible without a certain amount of violence. What we

have to do is to minimize it to the greatest extent possible. Indeed the very word non-violence, a negative word, means that it is an effort to abandon the violence that is inevitable in life. Therefore whoever believes in Ahimsa will engage himself in occupations that involve the least possible violence. Thus, for instance, one cannot conceive of a man believing in non-violence carrying on the occupation of a butcher. Not that a meat-eater cannot be non-violent — there are many among meat-eaters who are better observers of non-violence than those who abstain from meat, e.g. Deenabandhu Andrews — but even a meat-eater believing in non-violence will not go in for shikar, and he will not engage in war or war preparations. Thus there are many activities and occupations which necessarily involve violence and must be eschewed by a non-violent man. But there is agriculture without which life is impossible, and which does involve a certain amount of violence. The determining factor therefore is — is the occupation founded on violence? But since all activity involves some measure of violence, all we have to do is to minimise the violence involved in it. This is not possible without a heart-belief in non-violence. Suppose there is a man who does no actual violence, who labours for his bread, but who is always consumed with envy at other people's wealth or prosperity. He is not non-violent. A non-violent occupation is thus that occupation which is fundamentally free from violence and which involves no exploitation or envy of others.

“Now I have no historical proof, but I believe that there was a time in India when village economics were organized on the basis of such non-violent occupations, not on the basis of the rights of man but on the duties of man. Those who engaged themselves in such occupations did earn their living, but their labour contributed to the good of the community. A carpenter, for instance, ministered to the needs of the village farmer. He got no cash payment but was paid in kind by the villagers. There could be injustice even in this system, but it would be reduced to a minimum. I speak from personal knowledge of the life in

Kathiawad of over sixty years ago. There was more lustre in people's eyes, and more life in their limbs, than you find today. It was a life founded on unconscious Ahimsa.

"Body labour was at the core of these occupations and industries, and there was no large scale machinery. For when a man is content to own only so much land as he can till with his own labour, he cannot exploit others. Handicrafts exclude exploitation and slavery. Large scale machinery concentrates wealth in the hands of one man who lords it over the rest who slave for him. For he may be trying to create ideal conditions for his workmen, but it is none the less exploitation which is a form of violence.

"When I say that there was a time when society was based not on exploitation but on justice, I mean to suggest that truth and Ahimsa were not virtues confined to individuals but were practised by communities. To me virtue ceases to have any value if it is cloistered or possible only for individuals."

Harijan, 1-9-'40, p. 271.

52

YAJNA OR SACRIFICE

I

We make frequent use of the word *yajna*. We have raised spinning to the rank of a daily *mahayajna* (primary sacrifice). It is therefore necessary to think out the various implications of the term *yajna*.

Yajna means an act directed to the welfare of others, done without desiring any return for it, whether of a temporal or spiritual nature. 'Act' here must be taken in its widest sense, and includes thought and word, as well as deed. 'Others' embraces not only humanity, but all life. Therefore, and also from the standpoint of Ahimsa, it will not be a *yajna* to sacrifice lower animals even with a view to the service of humanity. It does not matter, that animal sacrifice is alleged to find a place in the Vedas. It is enough

for us, that such sacrifice cannot stand the fundamental tests of truth and non-violence. I readily admit my incompetence in Vedic scholarship. But the incompetence, so far as this subject is concerned, does not worry me, because even if the practice of animal sacrifice be proved to have been a feature of Vedic society, it can form no precedent for a votary of Ahimsa.

Again a primary sacrifice must be an act, which conduces the most to the welfare of the greatest number in the widest area, and which can be performed by the largest number of men and women with the least trouble. It will not therefore, be a *yajna*, much less a *mahayajna*, to wish or to do ill to anyone else, even in order to serve a so-called higher interest. And the Gita teaches, and experience testifies, that all action that cannot come under the category of *yajna* promotes bondage.

The world cannot subsist for a single moment without *yajna* in this sense, and therefore the Gita, after having dealt with true wisdom in the second chapter, takes up in the third the means of attaining it, and declares in so many words, that *yajna* came with the creation itself. This body therefore has been given us, only in order that we may serve all creation with it. And therefore, says the Gita, he who eats without offering *yajna* eats stolen food. Every single act of one who would lead a life of purity should be in the nature of *yajna*. *Yajna* having come to us with our birth, we are debtors all our lives, and thus for ever bound to serve the universe. And even as a bond-slave receives food, clothing and so on from the master whom he serves, so should we gratefully accept such gifts as may be assigned to us by the Lord of the universe. What we receive must be called a gift; for as debtors we are entitled to no consideration for the discharge of our obligations. Therefore we may not blame the Master, if we fail to get it. Our body is His to be cherished or cast away according to His will. This is not a matter for complaint or even pity ; on the contrary, it is a natural and even a pleasant and desirable state, if only we realize our proper

place in God's scheme. One does indeed need strong faith, if one would experience this supreme bliss. "Do not worry in the least about yourself, leave all worry to God," —this appears to be the commandment in all religions.

This need not frighten anyone. He who devotes himself to service with a clear conscience will day by day grasp the necessity for it in greater measure, and will continually grow richer in faith. The path of service can hardly be trodden by one, who is not prepared to renounce self-interest, and to recognize the conditions of his birth. Consciously or unconsciously everyone of us does render some service or other. If we cultivate the habit of doing this service deliberately, our desire for service will steadily grow stronger, and will make not only for our own happiness, but that of the world at large.

II

I wrote about *yajna* last week, but feel like writing more about it. It will perhaps be worth while further to consider a principle which has been created along with mankind. *Yajna* is duty to be performed, or service to be rendered, all the twenty-four hours of the day, and hence a maxim like **परोपकाराय सतां विभूतयः।** is inappropriate, if **उपकार** has any taste of favour about it. To serve without desire is to favour not others, but ourselves, even as in discharging a debt we serve only ourselves, lighten our burden and fulfil our duty. Again, not only the good, but all of us are bound to place our resources at the disposal of humanity. And if such is the law, as evidently it is, indulgence ceases to hold a place in life and gives way to renunciation. The duty of renunciation differentiates mankind from the beast.

Some object, that life thus understood becomes dull and devoid of art, and leaves no room for the householder. But renunciation here does not mean abandoning the world and retiring into the forest. The spirit of renunciation should rule all the activities of life. A householder does not cease to be one, if he regards life as a duty rather

than as an indulgence. A merchant, who operates in the sacrificial spirit, will have crores passing through his hands, but he will, if he follows the law, use his abilities for service. He will therefore not cheat or speculate, will lead a simple life, will not injure a living soul and will lose millions rather than harm anybody. Let no one run away with the idea, that this type of merchant exists only in my imagination. Fortunately for the world, it does exist in the West as well as in the East. It is true, such merchants may be counted on one's fingers' ends, but the type ceases to be imaginary, as soon as even one living specimen can be found to answer to it. All of us know of a philanthropic tailor in Wadhwan. I know of one such barber. Everyone of us knows such a weaver. And if we go deeply into the matter, we shall come across men in every walk of life, who lead dedicated lives. No doubt these sacrificers obtain their livelihood by their work. But livelihood is not their objective, but only a by-product of their vocation. Motilal was a tailor at first, and continued as tailor afterwards. But his spirit was changed, and his work was transmuted into worship. He began to think about the welfare of others, and his life became artistic in the real sense of the term. A life of sacrifice is the pinnacle of art, and is full of true joy. *Yajna* is not *yajna* if one feels it to be burdensome or annoying. Self-indulgence leads to destruction, and renunciation to immortality. Joy has no independent existence. It depends upon our attitude to life. One man will enjoy theatrical scenery, another the ever new scenes which unfold themselves in the sky. Joy, therefore, is a matter of individual and national education. We shall relish things which we have been taught to relish as children. And illustrations can be easily cited of different national tastes.

Again, many sacrificers imagine that they are free to receive from the people everything they need, and many things they do not need, because they are rendering disinterested service. Directly this idea sways a man, he ceases to be a servant, and becomes a tyrant over the people.

One who would serve will not waste a thought upon his own comforts, which he leaves to be attended to or neglected by his Master on high. He will not therefore encumber himself with everything that comes his way ; he will take only what he strictly needs and leave the rest. He will be calm, free from anger and unruffled in mind even if he finds himself inconvenienced. His service, like virtue, is its own reward, and he will rest content with it.

Again, one dare not be negligent in service, or be behindhand with it. He, who thinks, that one must be diligent only in one's personal business, and unpaid public business may be done in any way and at any time one chooses, has still to learn the very rudiments of the science of sacrifice. Voluntary service of others demands the best of which one is capable, and must take precedence over service of self. In fact, the pure devotee consecrates himself to the service of humanity without any reservation whatever.

From Yeravda Mandir, Chaps. XIV and XV.

53

DIGNITY OF LABOUR

“ We meet every day young men, graduates of our universities, hawking their degrees. They ask for the recommendation of a man who has no education but commands wealth, and in nine cases out of ten, the rich man's recommendation carries greater weight with the officials than the university degrees. What does this prove ? It proves that money is valued more than intellectual culture. Brain is at a high discount. Why is this so ? Because brain has failed to earn money. This failure is due to want of occupation in which intellectual equipment is in demand. Brain which is the most valuable and most powerful force in human society is a waste product for want of a market.

“ The peasant's assets are his hands. The zamindar's assets are his lands. Culture of land is agriculture. Culture of hand is industry. I am aware that agriculture has been called an industry, but differentiation on the basis of their essentials should not place agriculture in the category of industries. A branch of manual labour which affords facilities for a progressive culture of the

hand securing higher wages at successive stages should be properly called industry. This is not the case with the hand working on land. The man who drives a plough, sows seeds or weeds the fields, will not earn higher wages by the culture of the hand. There is no scope for attainment of a more remunerative skill in the agriculturist's occupation. Now take the case of a carpenter; he begins by making packing-cases. By culture he may learn to make a tantalus. Mark the progress in the manual skill resulting in a corresponding rise in the daily wages of the man. Let me assure you that the man who made the tantalus with two snakes with their expanded hoods guarding the bottles was first taken into my service for making packing-cases. His initial wages were 6 annas a day and in two years' time he was earning one rupee a day and the market value of his handi-work left at least 4 annas a day to his employer. This gives a rise in wages from Rs. 133 to 365 in two years....Over 98 per cent of the population work on land. Land does not grow in area. Hands grow in number with the growth of the population. A holding which sustained a family of 5 members 30 years back now has to support 12 to 15 members. In some cases this extra pressure is relieved by emigration but in most cases a low standard of vitality is accepted as inevitable."

The foregoing is an extract from Sjt. M. S. Das's speech delivered to the Bihar Young Men's Institute in 1924. I have kept that speech by me so as to be able to deal with the essential part of it on a suitable occasion. There is nothing new in what the speaker has said. But the value of his remarks is derived from the fact that though a lawyer of distinction, he has not only not despised labour with the hand but actually learnt handicrafts at a late period in life, not merely as a hobby, but for the sake of teaching young men dignity of labour and showing that without turning their attention to the industries of the country the outlook for India is poor. Sjt. Das has himself been instrumental in establishing a tannery at Cuttack which has been a centre of training for many a young man who was before a mere unskilled labourer. But the greatest industry which requires the intelligence of millions of hands is no doubt hand-spinning. What is needed is to give the vast agricultural population of this country an added and an intelligent occupation which will train both their brains and hands. It is the finest and cheapest education that can be devised for them. Cheapest because it is

immediately remunerative. And if we want universal education in India, the primary education consists not in a knowledge of three R's but in a knowledge of hand-spinning and all it implies. And when through it the hand and the eye are properly trained, the boy or the girl is ready to receive instruction in the three R's. This I know would appear to some to be utterly absurd and to others to be totally unworkable. But those who so think do not know the conditions of the millions. Nor do they know what it means to educate the millions of children of Indian peasantry. And this much-needed education cannot be given unless educated India which is responsible for the political awakening in the country will appreciate the dignity of labour and unless every young man would consider it his imperative duty to learn the art of hand-spinning and then reintroduce it in the villages.

Young India, 9-9-'26, p. 319.

54

REALIZE THE DIGNITY OF LABOUR

(From an address delivered in the Y.M.C.A. Auditorium, Madras on the 16th February, 1916)

You may ask : " Why should we use our hands ? " and say " the manual work has got to be done by those who are illiterate. I can only occupy myself with reading literature and political essays." I think we have to realize the dignity of labour. If a barber or shoemaker attends a college, he ought not to abandon the profession of barber or shoemaker. I consider that a barber's profession is just as good as the profession of medicine.

Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, G. A. Natesan & Co., (4th edition), p. 377 at p. 389.

THE GOSPEL OF WORK

(From "Weekly Letter" by M. D.)

A visitor asked Gandhiji if he was not putting too much emphasis on the gospel of work, if not making a kind of fetish of work. Gandhiji replied: "Not at all. I have always meant what I said. There can never be too much emphasis placed on work. I am simply repeating the gospel taught by the Gita, where the Lord says: 'If I did not remain ever at work sleeplessly, I should set a wrong example to mankind.' Did I not appeal to the professional men to turn the wheel to set an example to the rest of our countrymen?"

"Would you do the same thing with say one like Lord Buddha?"

"Yes; without the slightest hesitation."

"Then what would you say about great saints like Tukaram and Dnyanadev?"

"Who am I to judge them?"

"But you would judge Buddha?"

"I never said so. I simply said, if I had the good fortune to be face to face with one like him, I should not hesitate to ask him why he did not teach the gospel of work, in preference to one of contemplation. I should do the same thing if I were to meet these saints."

Harijan, 2-11-'35, p. 298.

NO LABOUR, NO MEAL

(Originally appeared in the columns of "Notes")

Some time ago I was taken to a magnificent mansion called the "Marble Palace" in Calcutta. It is richly furnished with some very expensive and some very beautiful paintings. The owners feed in the compound in front of the palace all the beggars who choose to go there, and I am told that the number everyday is several thousand. This is no doubt a princely charity. It does great credit to the benevolent spirit of the donors but the incongruity of this ragged humanity feeding whilst the majestic palace is, as it were, mocking at their wretched condition does not seem to strike the donors at all. Another such painful sight was witnessed by me on my visit to Suri, where the reception committee had arranged for feeding the beggars of the district. At the Marble Palace the crowd that besieged me passed through the line of beggars eating off their dusty leaves spread on the ground. Some almost trampled over them. It was by no means a pleasant spectacle. In Suri it was a little more decently managed, for the crowd was not to pass through the line of beggars but the motor car that drove me to my destination, was slowly taken through the line of beggars as they were eating. I felt humiliated, more so to think that this was all done in my honour, because, as it was put to me by one of the friends there, I was 'friend of the poor'. My friendship for them must be a sorry affair if I could be satisfied with a large part of humanity being reduced to beggary. Little did my friends know that my friendship for the paupers of India has made me hard-hearted enough to contemplate their utter starvation with equanimity in preference to their utter reduction to beggary. My Ahimsa would not tolerate the idea of giving a free meal to a healthy person who has not worked for it in some honest way, and if I had the power I would

stop every *sadavrat* where free meals are given. It has degraded the nation and has encouraged laziness, idleness, hypocrisy and even crime. Such misplaced charity adds nothing to the wealth of the country, whether material or spiritual, and gives a false sense of meritoriousness to the donor. How nice and wise it would be if the donor were to open institutions where they would give meals under healthy, clean surroundings to men and women who would work for them. I personally think that the spinning wheel or any of the processes that cotton has to go through will be an ideal occupation. But if they will not have that, they may choose any other work ; only the rule should be "No labour, no meal." Every city has its own difficult problem of beggars, a problem for which the moneyed men are responsible. I know that it is easier to fling free meals in the faces of idlers, but much more difficult to organize an institution where honest work has to be done before meals are served. From a pecuniary standpoint, in the initial stages at any rate, the cost of feeding people after taking work from them will be more than the cost of the present free kitchens. But I am convinced that it will be cheaper in the long run, if we do not want to increase in geometrical progression the race of loafers which is fast overrunning this land.

Young India, 13-8-'25, p. 282.

A SHAME

(Originally appeared in the columns of "Notes")

A strongly-built young man of about 25 years presented himself to me only yesterday and asked me whether he could stay with me for two or three days. He hails from Bahraich. His people have a few acres of land. He attended the Bombay Congress. Ever since he has been travelling and living on the hospitality of strangers. He mixes with Ramanujis. They, he tells me, give him food and something towards his railway fare. On my telling him that living, as he was doing, on charity was not right, his retort was: 'I see nothing wrong in my begging for food and expenses, as I expect to serve the people.' He could see no incongruity in demanding his maintenance first and then expecting, at some distant date, to render service against maintenance plus, of course, wages. As he had come at the dinner hour, I invited him to share the meal with us. I told him after the meal that he could not stay with us any longer, unless he was prepared to labour with us the whole day long and do the work allotted to him. Up to the time of writing he has not been seen by any of us.

I wish it was possible to say that this was the first case of its kind that came under my observation. Young men and women should be ashamed of begging for the supply of their wants. If the sense of shame that wrongly attaches to physical labour could be got rid of, there is work enough and to spare for young men and women of average intelligence.

Harijan, 1-3-'35, p. 17.

FULL REPENTANCE

(Originally appeared in the columns of "Notes")

Sometime ago, I referred in these columns to the case of a young man from Bahraich who was living on public charity. As has already been stated, he returned to me fully repentant. He is still at Maganvadi regularly working with us and doing his share of physical labour. He will soon earn his fare for going to Bahraich. But having found himself in Maganvadi, he does not want to leave as soon as he has earned his fare. He proposes to learn something and benefit by his stay in our midst. His friends in Bahraich have been pained over the criticism of his conduct. Avadhesh, for that is the young man's name admits the justness of my criticism though he says in extenuation that he had no guilty conscience when he was travelling and living on charity as he says is the custom among Ramanujis. But now that he has discovered his error, he promises never to repeat it. He has thus turned the error to good account and purged himself of any stigma that might have been brought on him by my criticism. It is to be wished that many others, who like Avadhesh are living on charity, will profit by his example and like him turn over a new leaf of the book of life. To err is human ; it is noble after discovery to correct the error and determine never to repeat it.

Harijan, 13-4-'35, p. 71.

THE BREAD PROBLEM

(Originally appeared in the columns of "Notes")

The...student says that many Bengalis cannot do national work or leave slavery because of the bread problem. It is not so much the bread problem as the bread labour problem. We the educated classes have lost the art of labouring for our bread. With the wages of weavers, carders and spinners rising daily, there is certainly no bread problem. Any man who weaves for eight hours a day may earn even at the commencement at least one rupee per day. Accomplished weavers today earn two rupees per day. We must not think of earning a livelihood by desk work merely.

Young India, 25-8-'21, p. 266.

BREAD LABOUR THE SOLUTION

(From "Gandhiji's Post-Prayer Speeches")

He (Gandhiji) then came to refer to a question which Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose had prepared for him as a result of discussions with him by visitors. What did he mean by bread labour and what was its application to the present state? The economics of bread labour were the living way of life. It meant that every man had to labour with his body for his food and clothing. If he could convince the people of the value and necessity of bread labour, there never would be any want of bread and cloth. He would have no hesitation in saying to the people with confidence that they must starve and go naked if they would neither work on the land nor spin and weave. They read in the papers that the whole of India was on the brink of starvation and nakedness. If his plan was accepted, they would soon find that India had enough food and

enough Khadi which the masses would produce for themselves. No doubt, they should be assisted in the matter of using the land wisely and should also be supplied with spinning and weaving accessories, and instructors. He added that he had not hesitated even to discuss his method with Mr. Casey * who was taking keen interest in the water supply of Bengal. No doubt Mr. Casey's was a gigantic scheme requiring years and tons of money. His was an efficient but unambitious and inexpensive programme.

Harijan, 7-9-'47, p. 309 at p. 316.

61

WORK AS THE ONLY CURE FOR POVERTY

(From "Weekly Letter" of M. D. — originally appeared under the title "Solution of Unemployment in Our Country")

In one of his talks to the students of the Village Workers' Training School, Gandhiji pointed out the difference between the problem of unemployment in this country and that in Western countries. "In one sense," he said, "the problem of unemployment in our country is not so difficult as in other countries. The mode of life is a great factor. The Western unemployed worker must have warm clothing, boots or shoes and socks like the rest of the people, he must have a warm house and many other things incidental to the cold climate. We do not want all these things. I have indeed wept to see the stark poverty and unemployment in our country, but I must confess our own negligence and ignorance are largely responsible for it. We do not know the dignity of labour as such. Thus a shoemaker will not do anything beyond his shoes, he will think all other labour is below his dignity. That wrong notion must go. There is enough employment in India for all who will work with their hands and feet honestly. God has given everyone the capacity to work and earn more than his daily bread, and whoever is ready to use that

* Former Governor of undivided Bengal.

capacity is sure to find work. No labour is too mean for one who wants to earn an honest penny. The only thing is the readiness to use the hands and feet that God has given us.

Harijan, 19-12-'36, p. 356.

62

‘ A GREAT EQUALIZER ’

(From “ Weekly Letter ” by C. S.)

Labour has not lagged behind in showing its active sympathy with the cause. The B. N. Railway Labourers’ Federation at Bilaspur invited Gandhiji to address them and gave him a purse of over five hundred rupees for Harijan service. Gandhiji was very much delighted to see labourers parting with a portion of hard-earned wages as a token of their identification with the cause. I reproduce below the whole speech he delivered on the occasion :

You may know, if you do not know already, that I have been closely associated with labourers ever since I went to South Africa. In India or in whatever part of the world, they have recognized me as a fellow labourer and received me as one of themselves. You will perhaps be surprised to know that even labourers in Lancashire instinctively recognized me as one of themselves and flocked around me in hundreds and thousands. The only difference between us is that I have become a labourer by choice, whilst you have been made labourers by force of circumstances and would perhaps love to be masters if you could. I early gave up the ambition of becoming a master, for I would then have belonged to an inconsiderable class and could not have identified myself, as I do today to the best of my ability, with the peniless pauper, the half-starved and the naked, the lowliest and the lost. I want labourers not to deplore, much less to despise, their lot and to realize the dignity of labour.

It is meet that you have come forward with your purse as a token of your sympathy with the Harijans. Who has suffered so much as they ? They are at the lowest rung of the ladder. The terrible hardships and privations they have to undergo can never be imagined by those who have not been victims to them. Other labourers may aspire to amass wealth and to become masters some day and thus to rise in the scale of social prestige ; but the Harijans can never entertain that ambition. The stigma of untouchability attaches to them from the mother's womb. They are born outcastes and remain outcastes till death. They have to live in segregated areas and are denied the amenities of life that the others enjoy. Even water, that free gift of God, is denied to them. I ask the Labour Federation to abolish all distinctions between Harijans and yourselves. I make the appeal deliberately for, being in direct touch with the mill-hands in Ahmedabad, I know that labourers do observe the distinction between Harijans and non-Harijans. I expect labourers, more than all others, to efface these distinctions. It has been my deep faith that we shall some day achieve communal unity through labourers. I consider labour to be a powerful unifying agent. It is a great equalizer. It should be a matter of shame to have communal divisions among labourers, who all earn their bread by the sweat of their brow and, therefore, belong to one vast brotherhood. Let them, therefore, begin with a thorough removal of untouchability. It will be a great step towards communal unity. Once the bar sinister against Harijans is removed, the way will be open for a wider unity among Hindus, Musalmans and other sister communities.

Harijan, 8-12-'33, p. 5 at p. 6.

SELF-HELP AND MUTUAL HELP

(Originally appeared in columns of "Notes" under the above title)

Self-help is the capacity to stand on one's legs without anybody's help. This does not mean indifference to or rejection of outside help, but it means the capacity to be at peace with oneself, to preserve one's self-respect, when outside help is not forthcoming or is refused. A farmer who, rejecting friends' help, insists on tilling his own soil, making his own implements, gathering his own harvest, spinning and weaving his own cloth and building his own house, all by himself, must be either foolish or self-conceited or barbarous. Self-help includes bread labour and means that every man shall earn his bread in the sweat of his brow. Hence a man who works in his field for eight hours daily is entitled to help from the weaver, the carpenter, the blacksmith or the mason. It is not only his right, it is his duty to seek the help of these, and they in their turn benefit by the agriculturist's labour in the field. The eye that would dispense with the help of the hands does not practice self-help, but is conceited and self-deceived. And as the different members of the body are self-reliant so far as their own functions are concerned and yet are mutually helpful and mutually dependent, so are we three hundred million members of the Indian body politic, each following the rule of self-help in performing his own function, and yet co-operating with one another in all matters of common interest. Only then can we be said to be servants of the country and only then do we deserve to be called nationalists.

(Abridged and translated from the *Navajivan* by M. D.)

Young India, 13-5-'26, p. 179.

DEPENDENCE ON SERVANTS

(Originally appeared under the title "Whose Need?")

The institution of domestic servants is an old one. But the attitude of master towards servant has changed from time to time. Some regard servants as members of the family whereas others look upon them as slaves or chattels. Between these two extreme views may be summed up the attitude of society in general towards servants. Nowadays servants are in great demand everywhere. They have become conscious of their value and naturally demand their own conditions of pay and service. This would be proper if it were invariably coupled with a proper understanding and performance of their duty. In that event they would cease to be servants and would earn for themselves the status of members of the family. The belief in the efficacy of violence is, however, in the air. How then can servants properly win the status of members of their masters' families? That is a question that may well be asked.

I hold that a man who desires the co-operation of and wishes to co-operate with others should not be dependent on servants. If anyone has to have one at a time of scarcity of servants, he will have to pay what is demanded and accept all other conditions with the result that he will, instead of being master, become the servant of his employee. This is good for neither the master nor the servant. But if what an individual seeks is not slavery but the co-operation of a fellow being, he will not only serve himself but also him whose co-operation he needs. Through the extension of this principle a man's family will become coterminous with the world and his attitude towards his fellow beings will also undergo a corresponding change. There is no other way of reaching the desired consummation.

He who wants to act on this principle will be content to start with small beginnings. In spite of a man's ability to command the co-operation of thousands he must have sufficient self-restraint and self-respect in him to enable him to stand alone. Such a person will never dream of looking on any person as his menial and try to keep him under subjugation. In fact he will forget altogether that he is master of his servants and will try his best to bring them to his level. In other words he should be content to do without what others cannot have.

Harijan, 10-3-'46, p. 40.

65

PHILOSOPHY OF WORK AND LEISURE

(Originally appeared in the "Weekly Notes" by M. D. under the title "From His Own Angle")

Most of the talks with Gandhiji nowadays turn upon topics such as the monotony of labour, dignity of labour etc. The simplest things, now that they have been taken up by Gandhiji, look intriguing to the people and they all pause and ask : "What can be the meaning of this ?" The plain truth about the matter is, however, this : that everyone looks at the implications of the A.I.V.I.A.* from his own narrow angle and considers what challenge this new drive of Gandhiji's has to offer himself....

Another friend asked Gandhiji : "You do not seem to have regard to the question of leisure. Too much work leaves little leisure to the poorer classes for any intellectual thinking and recreation, and you are now seeking to make them work more."

"Is that really so? I am trying to deal with people who do not know what to do with their enforced leisure. It is their enforced idleness that has made them like so many lifeless stones. There is such inertia that some of them do not want to be disturbed."

* All-India Village Industries Association.

“You will certainly give employment where it is needed. But are you not putting an excessive emphasis on dull monotonous work when you ask them to grind their own corn and husk their own rice ? ”

“It is no more monotonous than the idle hours hanging heavy on their hands, and it will cease to be monotonous when they realize that they not only earn a few coppers but preserve their own health and that of their countrymen. It is certainly not more monotonous than working away in modern factories. Any work, however humdrum, which does not take away the joy of creating something, is not monotonous. You go to a huge shoe-making factory. Some people would be engaged in making soles, some in making the uppers, some in doing other parts. This is monotonous, for, they work without intelligence, but there is no monotony about the work of the shoemaker who makes the whole shoe himself. His work will bear the impress of his skill, and he will have the joy of having created something himself. No, almost everything depends on the spirit in which a thing is done. I would not mind being my own drawer of water and hewer of wood, provided I am doing the work intelligently and not because someone compels me to do so. All labour when done intelligently and to some high purpose becomes at once re-creation and recreation.”

“Pardon me, but when you insist on pure and simple physical work, all day long, don't you run the risk of making them intellectually dull ? How many hours of physical work you think are necessary ? ”

“I would not mind working eight hours myself.”

“I do not mean yourself. You have enough intellectual energy and creative talent to fill the rest of your hours. Yours should be regarded as an exceptional case. I know you can derive joy from eight hours' spinning.”

“No. I want everyone to derive joy out of eight hours' work. Everything depends on the spirit in which work is done and an eight hours' day of honest, clean labour leaves

one enough time for intellectual pursuits. My object is to put an end to inertia and lethargy, and I would be immensely satisfied when I tell the world that every villager of India is earning Rs. 20 a month by the sweat of his brow."

Harijan, 8-3-'35, p. 31.

66

THE LURE OF LEISURE

(Originally appeared in the "Weekly Letter" of M. D.)

I gave some time ago in these columns Mr. L. P. Jacks' definition on leisure : " That part of a man's life where the struggle between white angels and black for the possession of his soul goes on with the greatest intensity," and tried to show, from the statistics he had given, how difficult is the science and art of leisure. Mr. Bertrand Russell who is keen on ensuring every citizen ample leisure would reduce the working hours to four per day. But an esteemed friend talking to Gandhiji the other day wondered if the problem of leisure was really so difficult. " Why do you insist on eight hours' manual work a day ? " he asked. " Is it not possible in a well ordered society to reduce the working day to two hours and then leave the citizen ample leisure for intellectual and artistic pursuits ? "

" We know that those who get all that leisure — both the working and the intellectual classes — do not make the best use of it. In fact we too often find the idle mind being turned into the Devil's workshop."

" No ; he could not be idling away. Supposing we divided the day into two hours' physical labour and six hours' intellectual labour ; would it not be good for the nation ? "

" I do not know that it would be feasible. I have not mathematically calculated it, but if a man will do the intellectual labour, only for profit and not for the nation, I am sure that the scheme will break down ; unless of course the State pays him amply for the two hours' labour and

compels him to do other work without paying him anything. That would be a fine thing, but it cannot be done without a kind of State conscription."

"But take for instance you. You cannot in the nature of things do eight hours' physical labour, and have to do eight hours' or more intellectual work. You do not abuse your leisure?"

"It is compulsory work and leaves no leisure, as for instance it would if I was going out to play tennis. But I tell you even taking my case, that I am sure our minds would have been infinitely better if we laboured with our hands for eight hours. We would not have a single idle thought, and I may tell you that my mind is not entirely free from idle thoughts. Even now I am what I am, because I realized the value of physical labour at a very early stage of my life."

"But then if physical work has such inherent virtue, our people have been working more than eight hours a day, not with any appreciable effect on the purity or strength of their minds."

"Physical labour by itself is not an education even as mental labour is not. It has been with our people deadly drudgery without their knowing this, and that deadens one's finer instincts. That is where I have my strongest complaint against the *savarna* Hindus. They have rendered work for the proletariat a task of hard drudgery, from which they have no pleasure and in which they have no interest. If they had been considered members of the society enjoying the same status as they, theirs would have been the proudest position in life. This is supposed to be the Kali Yuga. In the Satya Yuga or Golden Age, whenever it was, the society I dare say was better ordered than to-day. Ours is an ancient land where civilizations have come and gone, and it is difficult to say what exactly we were like at a particular age. But there is no doubt that we are where we are because we have long neglected the Shoodras. To-day's village culture, if culture it can be called, is an awful

culture. The villagers live as worse than animals. Nature compels animals to work and live naturally. We have so debased our working classes that they cannot work and live naturally. If our people had laboured intelligently and with joy, we should have been quite different today."

"Work and culture cannot be separated, then?"

"No. They tried to do it in ancient Rome and failed miserably. Culture without labour, or culture which is not the fruit of labour would be 'Vomitoria' as a Roman Catholic writer says. The Romans made indulgence a habit, and were ruined. Man cannot develop his mind by simply writing and reading or making speeches all day long. All my reading I tell you was done in the leisure hours I got in jails, and I have benefited by it because all of it was done not desultorily but for some purpose. And though I have worked physically for days and months for eight hours on end I don't think I suffered from mental decay. I have often walked as much as 40 miles a day and yet never felt dull."

"But you had this mental equipment."

"No fear. You don't know how mediocre I was at school and in England. I had never the courage to speak at debating society meetings or even in a gathering of vegetarians. No. Don't you run away with the thought that I was blessed with any extraordinary powers. God, I think, advisedly did not give me then the power to speak. You must know, among us, I am the least read man."

Harijan, 1-8-'36, p. 193 at p. 195.

THE PRICE OF LEISURE

(Originally appeared in the "Weekly Letter" by M. D.)

"My difficulty," said the worker, "is this, that though people in our villages are working like asses from morning until night without an hour's respite they do not get enough to eat. And you are asking them to labour still more!"

"What you say is news to me. The villages I know are those in which quantities of time are being wasted. But if, as you say, there are people who are being overworked, I am asking such people to accept nothing less than a living wage for nothing more than 8 hours' work."

"But why not accept the machine with all its good points, eliminating the bad ones?"

"I cannot afford to keep our human machines idle. We have such an amount of human power lying idle that we have no room for other power-driven machines."

"Introduce the power-driven machines and get them to work for only as long as is needed for our purposes."

"How do you mean? Supposing X produced all the cloth we needed, in mills specially constructed for the purpose, and gave work to say three million men, also distributing all the profit between them, what then? Then these three million men will be having all the money that used to be distributed between 300 million a hundred years ago."

"No, sir," argued the friend, "I propose that our men should not work more than is necessary for our purposes. Some work is indeed necessary for all of us, but why should we work, say more than a couple of hours a day and not devote the rest of our time to pleasant occupations?" (The talk was all in Hindustani and I am giving the objector's argument as best as I can.)

"So you would be satisfied if our men were to work only for one hour a day?"

"That should be worked out. But I should certainly be satisfied."

"Well, there's the rub. I should never be satisfied until all men had plenty of productive work, say eight hours a day."

"But why, I wonder, should you insist on this eight hours' minimum?"

"Because I know that millions will not employ themselves in work for the sake of it. If they did not need to work for their bread, they would lack the incentive. Supposing a few millionaires from America came and offered to send us all our food-stuffs and implored us not to work but to permit them to give vent to their philanthropy, I should refuse point-blank to accept their kind offer."

"That would be because the offer would hurt your self-respect!"

"No, not only because of that; but especially because it strikes at the root of the fundamental law of our being, viz., that we must work for our bread, that we eat our bread by the sweat of our brow."

"But that is your personal law. Would you leave the organization of society to society itself, or would you leave it to a few good guides?"

"I should leave it to a few good guides."

"Which means that you are for a dictatorship."

"No, for the simple reason that my fundamental principle is non-violence and I should not coerce any individual or community. Guidance is not dictatorship."

The argument might have gone on to an exasperating length, but Gandhiji had no more time and the friend had to be content for the day.

Harijan, 7-12-'35, p. 340.

SECTION THREE : ECONOMIC EQUALITY

68

MEANING OF ECONOMIC EQUALITY

“What exactly do you mean by economic equality,” Gandhiji was asked at the Constructive Workers’ Conference during his recent tour of Madras.

Gandhiji’s reply was that economic equality of his conception did not mean that everyone would literally have the same amount. It simply meant that everybody should have enough for his or her needs. For instance, he required two shawls in winter whereas his grand-nephew Kanu Gandhi who stayed with him and was like his own son did not require any warm clothing whatsoever. Gandhiji required goat’s milk, oranges and other fruit. Kanu could do with ordinary food. He envied Kanu but there was no point in it. Kanu was a young man whereas he was an old man of 76. The monthly expense of his food was far more than that of Kanu but that did not mean that there was economic inequality between them. The elephant needs a thousand times more food than the ant, but that is not an indication of inequality. So the real meaning of economic equality was : “To each according to his need.” That was the definition of Marx. If a single man demanded as much as a man with wife and four children that would be a violation of economic equality.

“Let no one try to justify the glaring difference between the classes and the masses, the prince and the pauper, by saying that the former need more. That will be idle sophistry and a travesty of my argument,” he continued. “The contrast between the rich and the poor today is a painful sight. The poor villagers are exploited by the foreign government and also by their own countrymen — the city-dwellers. They produce the food and go hungry.

They produce milk and their children have to go without it. It is disgraceful. Everyone must have a balanced diet, a decent house to live in, facilities for the education of one's children and adequate medical relief." That constituted his picture of economic equality. He did not want to taboo everything above and beyond the bare necessities, but they must come after the essential needs of the poor are satisfied. First things must come first.

Harijan, 31-3-'46, p. 63.

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WORKING FOR ECONOMIC EQUALITY

(Extracts from Chapter II, item 13, "Working for Economic Equality")

The last is the master key to non-violent independence. Working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour. It means the levelling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth on the one hand, and a levelling up of the semi-starved naked millions on the other. A non-violent system of government is clearly an impossibility so long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists. The contrast between the palaces of New Delhi and the miserable hovels of the poor labouring class cannot last one day in a free India in which the poor will enjoy the same power as the richest in the land. A violent and bloody revolution is a certainty one day unless there is a voluntary abdication of riches and the power that riches give and sharing them for the common good. I adhere to my doctrine of trusteeship in spite of the ridicule that has been poured upon it. It is true that it is difficult to reach. So is non-violence difficult to attain. But we made up our minds in 1920 to negotiate that steep ascent. We have found it worth the effort.

It involves a daily growing appreciation of the working of non-violence. It is expected of those Congressmen

who make a diligent search and reason out for themselves the why and the wherefore of what they are called upon to do. They may not be satisfied with mere conformity, honest or half-hearted, with the instructions issued from time to time. They should ask themselves how the existing inequalities can be abolished violently or non-violently. I think we know the violent way. It has not succeeded anywhere. Some claim that it has in Russia in a large measure. I doubt it. It is too early to make an unchallengeable claim. And now that war has broken out between Russia and Germany, we are unable to say what the ultimate result will be.

The non-violent experiment of ours is still in the making. We have nothing much yet to give by way of demonstration. But my observation leads me to think that the method has begun to work though ever so slowly in the direction of equality. And since non-violence is a process of conversion, the conversion, if achieved, must be permanent. A society or a nation constructed non-violently must be able to withstand attack upon its structure from without or within. We have moneyed Congressmen in the organization. They have to lead the way. This fight, which is conceived as the last, provides an opportunity for the closest heart-searching on the part of every individual Congressman. If ever we are to achieve equality, the foundation has to be laid now. Those who think that the major reforms will come after the advent of Swaraj are deceiving themselves as to the elementary working of non-violent Swaraj. It will not drop from heaven all of a sudden one fine morning. But it has to be built up brick by brick by corporate self-effort. We have travelled a fair way in that direction. But a much longer and weary distance has to be covered before we can behold Swaraj in its glorious majesty. Every Congressman has to ask himself what he has done towards the attainment of economic equality.

Constructive Programme (1941 Edn.), p. 18.

TECHNIQUES FOR REALIZATION OF ECONOMIC EQUALITY — GANDHIAN AND COMMUNIST

(From "Gandhiji's Communism" by Pyarelal)

Q. "What is the difference between your technique and that of the Communists or Socialists for realizing the goal of economic equality?"

A. "The Socialists and Communists say they can do nothing to bring about economic equality today. They will just carry on propaganda in its favour and to that end they believe in generating and accentuating hatred. They say, 'When they get control over the State they will enforce equality.' Under my plan, the State will be there to carry out the will of the people, not to dictate to them or force them to do its will. I shall bring about economic equality through non-violence, by converting the people to my point of view by harnessing the forces of love as against hatred. I will not wait till I have converted the whole society to my view but will straightaway make a beginning with myself. It goes without saying that I cannot hope to bring about economic equality of my conception, if I am the owner of fifty motor cars or even of ten *bighas* of land. For that I have to reduce myself to the level of the poorest of the poor. That is what I have been trying to do for the last fifty years or more, and so, I claim to be a foremost Communist although I make use of cars and other facilities offered to me by the rich. They have no hold on me and I can shed them at a moment's notice, if the interests of the masses demand it."

Harijan, 31-3-'46, p. 63 at p. 64.

ATTAINING ECONOMIC EQUALITY

(Originally appeared in the columns of "Question Box" under the caption "Economic Equality")

Q. While working the constructive programme, can a Congressman preach economic equality? How can working the civil disobedience programme bring it about?

A. You can certainly preach it, if your speech is strictly non-violent and not in the manner of some, who, I know, have preached forcible dispossession of landowners and capitalists. But I have shown a better way than preaching. The constructive programme takes the country a long way towards the goal. This is the most auspicious time for it. The Charkha and the allied industries, if fully successful, practically abolish all inequalities, both social and economic. The rising consciousness of the strength which non-violence gives to the people, and their intelligent refusal to co-operate in their slavery must bring about equality.

Harijan, 25-1-'42, p. 16.

EQUAL DISTRIBUTION

In last week's article on the constructive programme * I mentioned equal distribution of wealth as one of the thirteen items.

* *Harijan* of 18-8-'40, p. 252 — "Implications of Constructive Programme". After describing the importance of the 13 items of the constructive programme, Gandhiji observed in the concluding paragraph of the article:

"The whole of this programme will, however, be a structure on sand if it is not built on the solid foundation of economic equality. Economic equality must never be supposed to mean possession of an equal amount of worldly goods by everyone. It does mean, however, that everyone will have a proper house to live in, sufficient and balanced food to eat, and sufficient Khadi with which to cover himself. It also means that the cruel inequality that obtains today will be removed by purely non-violent means. This question, however, requires to be separately dealt with."

The real implication of equal distribution is that each man shall have the wherewithal to supply all his natural needs and no more. For example, if one man has a weak digestion and requires only a quarter of a pound of flour for his bread and another needs a pound, both should be in a position to satisfy their wants. To bring this ideal into being the entire social order has got to be reconstructed. A society based on non-violence cannot nurture any other ideal. We may not perhaps be able to realize the goal, but we must bear it in mind and work unceasingly to near it. To the same extent as we progress towards our goal we shall find contentment and happiness, and to that extent too shall we have contributed towards the bringing into being of a non-violent society.

It is perfectly possible for an individual to adopt this way of life without having to wait for others to do so. And if an individual can observe a certain rule of conduct, it follows that a group of individuals can do likewise. It is necessary for me to emphasize the fact that no one need wait for anyone else in order to adopt a right course. Men generally hesitate to make a beginning if they feel that the objective cannot be had in its entirety. Such an attitude of mind is in reality a bar to progress.

Now let us consider how equal distribution can be brought about through non-violence. The first step towards it is for him who has made this ideal part of his being to bring about the necessary changes in his personal life. He would reduce his wants to a minimum, bearing in mind the poverty of India. His earnings would be free of dishonesty. The desire for speculation would be renounced. His habitation would be in keeping with the new mode of life. There would be self-restraint exercised in every sphere of life. When he has done all that is possible in his own life, then only will he be in a position to preach this ideal among his associates and neighbours.

Indeed at the root of this doctrine of equal distribution must lie that of the trusteeship of the wealthy for the

superfluous wealth possessed by them. For according to the doctrine they may not possess a rupee more than their neighbours. How is this to be brought about? Non-violently? Or should the wealthy be dispossessed of their possessions? To do this we would naturally have to resort to violence. This violent action cannot benefit society. Society will be the poorer, for it will lose the gifts of a man who knows how to accumulate wealth. Therefore the non-violent way is evidently superior. The rich man will be left in possession of his wealth, of which he will use what he reasonably requires for his personal needs and will act as a trustee for the remainder to be used for society. In this argument honesty on the part of the trustee is assumed.

As soon as a man looks upon himself as a servant of society, earns for its sake, spends for its benefit, then purity enters into his earnings and there is Ahimsa in his venture. Moreover, if men's minds turn towards this way of life, there will come about a peaceful revolution in society, and that without any bitterness.

It may be asked whether history at any time records such a change in human nature. Such changes have certainly taken place in individuals. One may not perhaps be able to point to them in a whole society. But this only means that up till now there has never been an experiment on a large scale in non-violence. Somehow or other the wrong belief has taken possession of us that Ahimsa is pre-eminently a weapon for individuals and its use should, therefore, be limited to that sphere. In fact this is not the case. Ahimsa is definitely an attribute of society. To convince people of this truth is at once my effort and my experiment. In this age of wonders no one will say that a thing or idea is worthless because it is new. To say it is impossible because it is difficult, is again not in consonance with the spirit of the age. Things undreamt of are daily being seen, the impossible is ever becoming possible. We are constantly being astonished these days at the

amazing discoveries in the field of violence. But I maintain that far more undreamt of and seemingly impossible discoveries will be made in the field of non-violence. The history of religion is full of such examples. To try to root out religion itself from society is a wild-goose chase. And were such an attempt to succeed, it would mean the destruction of society. Superstition, evil customs and other imperfections creep in from age to age and mar religion for the time being. They come and go. But religion itself remains, because the existence of the world in a broad sense depends on religion. The ultimate definition of religion may be said to be obedience to the law of God. God and His law are synonymous terms. Therefore God signifies an unchanging and living law. No one has ever really found Him. But *avatars* and prophets have, by means of their *tapasya*, given to mankind a faint glimpse of the eternal law.

If, however, in spite of the utmost efforts the rich do not become guardians of the poor in the true sense of the term and the latter are more and more crushed and die of hunger, what is to be done? In trying to find the solution to this riddle I have lighted on non-violent non-co-operation and civil disobedience as the right and infallible means. The rich cannot accumulate wealth without the co-operation of the poor in society. Man has been conversant with violence from the beginning, for he has inherited this strength from the animal in his nature. It was only when he rose from the state of a quadruped (animal) to that of a biped (man) that the knowledge of the strength of Ahimsa entered into his soul. This knowledge has grown within him slowly but surely. If this knowledge were to penetrate to and spread amongst the poor, they would become strong and would learn how to free themselves by means of non-violence from the crushing inequalities which have brought them to the verge of starvation.

Harijan, 25-8-'40, p. 260.

EQUALITY OF WAGES

(From "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary")

Q. To those who had lost all their trade, your advice is that they should voluntarily turn themselves into labourers. Who will then look after education, commerce and the like? If you thus dissolve the division of labour, will not the cause of civilization suffer?

A. The question betrayed ignorance of his meaning. If a man could not carry on his original mercantile business, it was not open to him but obligatory on him to take to physical labour, say scavenging or breaking stones. He believed in the division of labour or work. But he did insist on equality of wages. The lawyer, the doctor, or the teacher was entitled to no more than the *bhangi*. Then only would division of work uplift the nation or the earth. There was no other royal road to true civilization or happiness.

Spirit giveth life, the letter killeth. A Ganapati with an elephant's head was a monster but as a representation of Om was an uplifting symbol. Ravana with ten heads was a fabled fool but if it meant a man who carried no head about him and was tossed to and fro by the fleeting passions, he was a many-headed demon.

Harijan, 23-3-'47, p. 78.

EQUAL PAY

(From "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary")

Q. Do you hold that all persons who perform useful and necessary service in society, whether farmer or *bhangi*, engineer or accountant, doctor or teacher, have a moral right only to equal wages with the rest? Of course, it is understood, educational or other expenses shall be a charge of the State. Our question is, should not all persons get the same wages for their personal needs? Do you not think that if we work for this equality, it will cut sooner under the root of untouchability than any other process?

As to this Gandhiji had no doubt that if India was to live an exemplary life of independence which would be the envy of the world, all the *bhangis*, doctors, lawyers, teachers, merchants and others would get the same wages for an honest day's work. Indian society may never reach the goal but it was the duty of every Indian to set his sail towards that goal and no other if India was to be a happy land.

Harijan, 16-3-'47, p. 61 at p. 67.

75

MINISTERIAL SALARIES

I

(Originally appeared in the columns of "Question Box")

Q. On what principle is the question of the salaries of ministers in Congress majority provinces going to be settled this time? Does the Karachi resolution in this regard still hold? If the question is to be settled on the basis of the present high prices, is it possible, within the limits of their revenues, for the provincial budgets to increase the pays of all their servants threefold? If not, will it be proper for the ministers to be paid Rs. 1,500/- while a *chaprasi* or a teacher is told to make two ends meet on Rs. 15/- and 12/- per month, and not make a fuss about it because Congress has to run the administration?

A. The question is apt. Why should a minister draw Rs. 1,500/- and a *chaprasi* or a teacher Rs. 15/- per month? But the question cannot be solved by the mere raising of it. Such differences have existed for ages. Why should an elephant require an enormous quantity of food and a mere grain suffice for the ant? The question carries its own answer. God gives to each one according to his need. If we could as definitely know the variations in the needs of men as those of the elephant and the ant, no doubts would arise. Experience tells us that differences in requirements do exist in society. But we do not know the

law governing them. All therefore that is possible today is to try to reduce the difference as far as possible. The reduction can be brought about by peaceful agitation and by the creation of public opinion. It cannot be done by force or by *duragraha* in the name of Satyagraha. The ministers are the people's men. Their wants even before they took office were not those of *chaprasis*. I would love to see a *chaprasi* become worthy of holding the office of a minister and yet not increase his needs. It should also be clearly understood that no ministers need draw up to the maximum of the salary fixed.

It is worth while pondering over one thing that arises out of the questions. Is it possible for the *chaprasi* to support himself and his family on Rs. 15/- per month without taking bribes ? Should he not be given enough to keep him above temptation ? The remedy for this is that as far as possible we should be our own *chaprasis*. But even so if we need them we must pay them enough for their requirements. In this way the big gulf that exists between minister and *chaprasi* will be bridged.

It is another matter as to why the pay of the ministers has been raised from Rs. 500/- to Rs. 1500/- p.m. But this is nothing as compared with, and does not solve, the main problem. With the solution of the latter it will *ipso facto* be solved.

Harijan, 21-4-'46, p. 93.

II

(Originally appeared under the title "Ministerial Salaries")

I have to pay heavily for the caution with which I wrote the other day the paragraph in *Harijan* in regard to increase in ministerial salaries. I have to go through long letters bewailing my caution and arguing with me to revise my view. How can ministers make large increases in their own original fat salaries when the poor *chaprasis* and clerks get an increase which hardly meets the occasion ? I have re-read my note and I claim that the short note includes all that the various correspondents desire.

But in order to avoid any misunderstanding, I expand my meaning.

I have been twitted for not referring to the Karachi resolution. The lower scale of ministers' salaries rests on much higher ground than the authority of a resolution. In any event, so far as I am aware, the Congress has never varied that resolution. It is as binding today as it was when it was passed.

I do not know that the increase in the salaries is justified. But I must not off-hand condemn the increase without knowing the case of ministers. Critics should know that I have no authority over them or anyone else except myself. Nor am I present at all the meetings of the Working Committee. I attend only when required by the President. I can only give my opinion for what it is worth. And, if it is to have any weight, it must be well-conceived and based on ascertained facts.

The question of the hideous inequality between the rich and the poor and the lower services and the higher is a separate subject requiring drastic and well thought out method and could not be merely incidental to the lowering of the salaries of the few ministers and their secretaries. Both subjects require to be dealt with on merits. The question of salaries could be and should be easily disposed of by the ministers concerned. The other is a much vaster subject requiring a thorough overhauling. I would any day agree that the ministers should tackle the subject in their own province without delay and that the lower ranks should before everything else have their salaries fully reconsidered and increased wherever necessary.

Harijan, 9-6-'46, p. 176.

SECTION FOUR : TRUSTEESHIP

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THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

(From "Gandhi Seva Sangh — IV — More Communings" by M. D.)

"The trusteeship theory," said a member, "is beyond the grasp of my intellect. Could you explain it briefly?"

Gandhiji : "How can I explain it in a few minutes, and if I cannot explain it in a few minutes, I do not know that I can succeed in explaining it even in a few hours. Supposing I have come by a fair amount of wealth either by way of legacy, or by means of trade and industry, I must know that all that wealth does not belong to me, what belongs to me is the right to an honourable livelihood, no better than that enjoyed by millions of others. The rest of my wealth belongs to the community and must be used for the welfare of the community. I enunciated this theory when the Socialist theory was placed before the country in respect to the possessions held by zamindars and ruling chiefs. They would do away with these privileged classes. I want them to outgrow their greed and sense of possession, and to come down in spite of their wealth to the level of those who earn their bread by labour. The labourer has to realize that the wealthy man is less owner of his wealth than the labourer is owner of *his* own, viz. the power to work.

"The question how many can be real trustees according to this definition is beside the point. If the theory is true, it is immaterial whether many live up to it or only one man lives up to it. The question is of conviction. If you accept the principle of Ahimsa, you have to strive to live up to it, no matter whether you succeed or fail. There is nothing in this theory which can be said to be beyond the grasp of intellect, though you may say it is difficult of practice."

Harijan, 3-6-'39, p. 145.

WHAT IS A TRUST ?

(From " Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary ")

" You have asked rich men to be trustees. Is it implied that they should give up private ownership in their property and create out of it a trust valid in the eyes of the law and managed democratically ? How will the successor of the present incumbent be determined on his demise ? "

In answer to the question Gandhiji said that he adhered to the position taken by him years ago that everything belonged to God and was from God. Therefore it was for His people as a whole, not for a particular individual. When an individual had more than his proportionate portion he became a trustee of that portion for God's people.

God who was all-powerful had no need to store. He created from day to day ; hence men also should in theory live from day to day and not stock things. If this truth was imbibed by the people generally, it would become legalized and trusteeship would become a legalized institution. He wished it became a gift from India to the world. Then there would be no exploitation and no reserves as in Australia and other countries for white men and their posterity. In these distinctions lay the seed of a war more virulent than the last two. As to the successor, the trustee in office would have the right to nominate his successor subject to legal sanction.

Harijan, 23-2-'47, p. 37 at p. 39.

SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT TRUSTEESHIP

Q. Is it possible to defend by means of non-violence anything which can only be gained through violence ?

A. What is gained by violence cannot only not be defended by non-violence but the latter requires the abandonment of the ill-gotten gains.

Q. Is the accumulation of capital possible except through violence whether open or tacit ?

A. Such accumulation by private persons is impossible except through violent means but accumulation by the State in a non-violent society is not only possible, it is desirable and inevitable.

Q. Whether a man accumulates material or moral wealth he does so only through the help or co-operation of other members of society. Has he then the moral right to use any of it mainly for personal advantage ?

A. No, he has no moral right.

Q. How would the successor of a trustee be determined ? Will he only have the right of proposing a name, the right of finalization being vested in the State ?

A. Choice should be given to the original owner who became the first trustee, but the choice must be finalized by the State. Such arrangement puts a check on the State as well as the individual.

Q. When the replacement of private by public property thus takes place through the operation of the theory of trusteeship, will the ownership vest in the State, which is an instrument of violence or in associations of a voluntary character like village communes and municipalities, which may of course derive their final authority from State-made laws ?

A. That question involves some confusion of thought. Legal ownership in the transformed condition vested in the trustee, not in the State. It is to avoid confiscation that the doctrine of trusteeship came into play retaining

for the society the ability of the original owner in his own right. Nor need the State always be based on violence. It might be so in theory but the practice of the theory demands a State which would for the most part be based on non-violence.

Harijan, 16-2-'47, p. 25.

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WHY DO I PREFER THE DOCTRINE OF TRUSTEESHIP ?

(Shri Nirmal Kumar Bose had an interview with Gandhiji on the 9th and 10th November 1934, a report of which as corrected by Gandhiji was published in the October, 1935 issue of *The Modern Review*. Some questions and answers from that Report are given below.)

Q. Is love or non-violence compatible with possession or exploitation in any shape or form ? If possession and non-violence cannot go together, then do you advocate the maintenance of private ownership of land or factories as an unavoidable evil which will continue so long as individuals are not ripe or educated enough to do without it ? If it be such a step, would it not be better to own all the land through the State and place the State under the control of the masses ?

A. Love and exclusive possession can never go together. Theoretically when there is perfect love, there must be perfect non-possession. The body is our last possession. So a man can only exercise perfect love and be completely dispossessed, if he is prepared to embrace death and renounce his body for the sake of human service. But that is true in theory only. In actual life, we can hardly exercise perfect love, for the body as a possession will always remain with us. Man will ever remain imperfect, and it will always be his part to try to be perfect. So that perfection in love or non-possession will remain an unattainable ideal as long as we are alive, but towards which we must ceaselessly strive.

Those who own money now, are asked to behave like

trustees holding their riches on behalf of the poor. You may say that trusteeship is a legal fiction. But if people meditate over it constantly and try to act up to it, then life on earth would be governed far more by love than it is at present. Absolute trusteeship is an abstraction like Euclid's definition of a point, and is equally unattainable. But if we strive for it, we shall be able to go further in realizing a state of equality on earth than by any other method.

Q. If you say that private possession is incompatible with non-violence, why do you put up with it ?

A. That is a concession one has to make to those who earn money but who would not voluntarily use their earnings for the benefit of the mankind.

Q. Why then not have State-ownership in place of private property and thus minimize violence ?

A. It is better than private ownership. But that, too, is objectionable on the ground of violence. It is my firm conviction that if the State suppressed capitalism by violence, it will be caught in the evils of violence itself and fail to develop non-violence at any time. The State represents violence, in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the State is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence. Hence I prefer the doctrine of trusteeship.

Q. Let us come to a specific instance. Suppose an artist leaves certain pictures to a son who does not appreciate their value for the nation and sells them or wastes them, so that the nation stands to lose something precious through one person's folly. If you are assured that the son would never be a trustee in the sense in which you would like to have him, do you not think that the State would be justified in taking away those things from him with the minimum use of violence ?

A. Yes, the State will, as a matter of fact, take away those things and I believe it will be justified if it uses the minimum of violence. But the fear is always there that the State may use too much violence against those who differ

from it. I would be very happy indeed if the people concerned behaved as trustees ; but if they fail, I believe we shall have to deprive them of their possessions through the State with the minimum exercise of violence. That is why I said at the Round Table Conference that every vested interest must be subjected to scrutiny, and confiscation ordered where necessary — with or without compensation as the case demanded.

What I would personally prefer would be not a centralization of power in the hands of the State, but an extension of the sense of trusteeship, as in my opinion the violence of private ownership is less injurious than the violence of the State. However, if it is unavoidable, I would support a minimum of State-ownership.

Q. Then, sir, shall we take it that the fundamental difference between you and the Socialists is that you believe that men live more by self-direction or will than by habit, and they believe that men live more by habit than by will ; that being the reason why you strive for self-correction while they try to build up a system under which men will find it impossible to exercise their desire for exploiting others ?

A. While admitting that man actually lives by habit, I hold that it is better for him to live by the exercise of will. I also believe that men are capable of developing their will to an extent that will reduce exploitation to a minimum. I look upon an increase of the power of the State with the greatest fear, because although while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress. We know of so many cases where men have adopted trusteeship, but none where the State has really lived for the poor.

Q. But have not those cases of trusteeship which you sometimes cite been due to your personal influence rather than to anything else ? Teachers like you come infrequently. Would it not be better, therefore, to trust to some organization to effect the necessary changes in man,

rather than depend upon the casual advent of men like yourself ?

A. Leaving me aside, you must remember that the influence of all great teachers of mankind has outlived their lives. In the teachings of each prophet like Moham-med, Buddha or Jesus, there was a permanent portion and there was another which was suited to the needs and requirements of the times. It is only because we try to keep up the permanent with the impermanent aspects of their teaching that there is so much distortion in religious practice today. But that apart you can see that the influence of these men has sustained after they have passed away.

Moreover, what I disapprove of is an organization based on force which a State is. Voluntary organization there must be.

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THE BRIDGE TO CLOSE THE GULF

(From "Weekly Letter" by M. D.—extract from reply of Gandhiji to the address of Mysore Municipality)

I do not grudge the prince his palace and the millionaire his mansion, but it is my earnest request to them to do something to bridge the gulf that separates them from the peasant. Let them construct a bridge that would bring them closer to the poor agriculturist. Let their lives bear some proportion to the lives of the poor around them. I have been trying according to my lights to construct this bridge, a bridge which, I submit in all humility, you cannot construct by means of all your gold mines and Bhadravatis.

Young India, 4-8-'27, p. 242 at p. 243.

STATUTORY TRUSTEESHIP

(From "Gandhiji's Communism" by Pyarelal)

As for the present owners of wealth, they would have to make their choice between war and voluntarily converting themselves into trustees of their wealth. They would be allowed to retain the stewardship of their possessions and to use their talent to increase the wealth, not for their own sakes, but for the sake of the nation and, therefore, without exploitation. The State would regulate the rate of commission which they would get commensurate with the service rendered and its value to society. Their children would inherit the stewardship only if they proved their fitness for it.

"Supposing India becomes a free country tomorrow," he concluded, "all the capitalists will have an opportunity of becoming statutory trustees." But such a statute will not be imposed from above. It will have to come from below. When the people understand the implications of trusteeship and the atmosphere is ripe for it, the people themselves, beginning with *gram panchayats*, will begin to introduce such statutes. Such a thing coming from below is easy to swallow. Coming from above it is liable to prove a dead weight.

Harijan, 31-3-'46, p. 63.

PRACTICAL TRUSTEESHIP FORMULA

(Originally appeared under the title "Gandhiji's Doctrine of Trusteeship" by Pyarelal)

On our release from prison, we took up the question where we had left it in the Aga Khan Palace Detention Camp. Kishorlalbhai and Narharibhai joined in drawing up a simple, practical trusteeship formula. It was placed before Bapu who made a few changes in it. The final draft read as follows :

1. Trusteeship provides a means of transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one. It gives no quarter to capitalism, but gives the present owning class a chance of reforming itself. It is based on the faith that human nature is never beyond redemption.

2. It does not recognize any right of private ownership of property except inasmuch as it may be permitted by society for its own welfare.

3. It does not exclude legislative regulation of the ownership and use of wealth.

4. Thus under State-regulated trusteeship, an individual will not be free to hold or use his wealth for selfish satisfaction or in disregard of the interest of society.

5. Just as it is proposed to fix a decent minimum living wage, even so a limit should be fixed for the maximum income that would be allowed to any person in society. The difference between such minimum and maximum incomes should be reasonable and equitable and variable from time to time so much so that the tendency would be towards obliteration of the difference.

6. Under the Gandhian economic order the character of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal whim or greed.

Harijan, 25-10-'52, p. 301.

THE PLACE OF A TRUSTEE IN A NON-VIOLENT SOCIETY

(Originally appeared in the columns of "Question Box" under the caption "The Theory of Trusteeship")

Q. From your writings, one gathers the notion that your 'trustee' is not anything more than a very benevolent philanthropist and donor, such as the first Parsi Baronet, the Tatas, the Wadias, the Birlas, Shri Bajaj and the like. Is that so? Will you please explain whom you regard as the primary or rightful beneficiaries of the possessions of a rich man? Is there to be a limit to the amount or part of the income and capital which he can spend upon himself, his kith and kin and for non-public purposes? Can one who exceeds such limit be prevented from doing so? If he is incompetent or otherwise fails to discharge his obligations as a trustee, can he be removed and called upon to render accounts by a beneficiary or the State? Do the same principles apply to Princes and Zamindars, or is their trusteeship of a different nature?

A. If the trusteeship idea catches, philanthropy as we know it, will disappear. Of those you have named only Jamnalalji came near, but only near it. A trustee has no heir but the public. In a State built on the basis of non-violence, the commission of trustees will be regulated. Princes and Zamindars will be on a par with the other men of wealth.

Harijan, 12-4-'42, p. 116.

TRUSTEE OF HIS WEALTH

(Originally appeared under the title "An Interesting Discourse — II — A Sister's Questions" by M. D.)

Q. May a non-violent man possess wealth and if he may, how can he keep it non-violently ?

Gandhiji : He may not own any wealth, though he may possess millions. Let him hold it in trust. If he lives among dacoits and thieves, he may possess very little, indeed little beyond a loin-cloth. And if he does this, he will convert them.

But you must not generalize. In a non-violent State, there will be very few dacoits. For the individual, the golden rule is that he will *own* nothing. If I decided to settle and work among the so-called criminal tribes, I should go to them without any belongings and depend on them for my food and shelter. The moment they feel that I am in their midst in order to serve them, they will be my friends. In that attitude is true Ahimsa.

Harijan, 1-9-'40, p. 266.

NON-STEALING AND NON-POSSESSION OR POVERTY

(From *Ashram Observances in Action* translated from Gujarati by V. G. D.)

These two, along with the three that have gone before*, constitute the five *mahavratas* (primary observances) of old and have been included in the Ashram observances as they are necessary for one who seeks self-realization. But they do not call for any lengthy discussion.

* "Truth" — *Harijan*, 18-7-'48, p. 170.

"Ahimsa" — *Harijan*, 1-8-'48, p. 191 and 15-8-'48, p. 202.

"Brahmacharya" — *Harijan*, 5-9-'48, p. 230 and 26-9-'48, p. 258.

(A) Non-stealing

To take something from another without his permission is theft of course. But it is also theft to use a thing for a purpose different from the one intended by the lender or to use it for a period longer than that which has been fixed with him. The profound truth upon which this observance is based is that God never creates more than what is strictly needed for the moment. Therefore whoever appropriates more than the minimum that is really necessary for him is guilty of theft.

(B) Non-possession or Poverty

This is covered by non-stealing. We may neither take nor keep a superfluous thing. It is, therefore, a breach of this observance, to possess food or furniture which we do not really need. He who can do without chairs will not keep them in his house. The seeker will deliberately and voluntarily reduce his wants and cultivate progressively simple habits.

Non-stealing and Non-possession are mental states only. No human being can keep these observances to perfection. The body too is a possession, and so long as it is there, it calls for other possessions in its train. But the seeker will cultivate the spirit of detachment and give up one possession after another. Everyone cannot be judged by the same standard. An ant may fall from grace if it stores two grains instead of one. An elephant on the other hand will have a lot of grass heaped before itself and yet it cannot be charged with having 'great possessions'.

These difficulties appear to have given rise to the current conception of *sannyasa* (renunciation of the world), which is not accepted by the Ashram. Such *sannyasa* may be necessary for some rare spirit who has the power of conferring benefits upon the world by only thinking good thoughts in a cave. But the world would be ruined if every one became a cave-dweller. Ordinary men and women can only cultivate mental detachment. Whoever lives in the world and lives in it only for serving it is a *sannyasi*.

We of the Ashram hope to become *sannyasis* in this sense. We may keep necessary things but should be ready to give up everything including our bodies. The loss of nothing whatever should worry us at all. So long as we are alive, we should render such service as we are capable of. It is a good thing if we get food to eat and clothes to wear ; it is also a good thing if we don't. We should so train our minds that no Ashramite will fail to give a good account of himself when testing time comes.

Harijan, 10-10-'48, p. 271.

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THE VOW OF NON-THIEVING

(From an address delivered in the Y.M.C.A. Auditorium, Madras on 16-2-'16)

I suggest that we are thieves in a way. If I take anything that I do not need for my own immediate use, and keep it, I thief it from somebody else. I venture to suggest that it is the fundamental law of Nature, without exception, that Nature produces enough for our wants from day-to-day, and if only everybody took enough for himself and nothing more, there would be no pauperism in this world, there would be no man dying of starvation in this world. But so long as we have got this inequality so long we are thieving. I am no Socialist and I do not want to dispossess those who have got possessions : but I do say that, personally, those of us who want to see light out of darkness have to follow this rule. I do not want to dispossess anybody. I should then be departing from the rule of Ahimsa. If somebody else possess more than I do, let him. But so far as my own life has to be regulated, I do say that I dare not possess anything which I do not want. In India we have got three millions of people having to be satisfied with one meal a day, and that meal consisting of a *chapati* containing no fat in it, and a pinch of salt. You and I have no right to anything that we really have until these three millions are clothed and fed better. You and I, who ought

to know better, must adjust our wants, and even undergo voluntary starvation in order that they may be nursed, fed and clothed. Then there is the vow of non-possession which follows as a matter of course.

Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, G. A. Natesan & Co., (4th Edition) p. 377 at p. 384.

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VOLUNTARY POVERTY

(From an address at the Guildhouse, London, delivered on 23-9-'31)

When I found myself drawn into the political coil, I asked myself what was necessary for me in order to remain absolutely untouched by immorality, by untruth, by what is known as political gain....I do not propose to take you through all the details of that act or performance interesting and, to me, sacred though they are — but I can only tell you that it was a difficult struggle in the beginning and it was a wrestle with my wife and — as I can vividly recall — with my children also. Be that as it may, I came definitely to the conclusion that, if I had to serve the people in whose midst my life was cast and of whose difficulties I was witness from day-to-day, I must discard all wealth, all possession.

I cannot tell you with truth that, when this belief came to me, I discarded everything immediately. I must confess to you that progress at first was slow. And now, as I recall those days of struggle, I remember that it was also painful in the beginning. But, as days went by, I saw that I had to throw overboard many other things which I used to consider as mine, and a time came when it became a matter of positive joy to give up those things. And one after another then, by almost geometric progression, the things slipped away from me. And, as I am describing my experiences, I can say a great burden fell off my shoulders, and I felt that I could now walk with ease and do my work also in the service of my fellow-men

with great comfort and still greater joy. The possession of anything then became a troublesome thing and a burden.

Exploring the cause of that joy, I found that, if I kept anything as my own, I had to defend it against the whole world. I found also that there were many people who did not have the thing, although they wanted it; and I would have to seek police assistance also if hungry, famine-stricken people, finding me in a lonely place, wanted not merely to divide the thing with me but to dispossess me. And I said to myself: if they want it and would take it, they do so not from any malicious motive, but they would do it because theirs was a greater need than mine.

And then I said to myself: possession seems to me to be a crime: I can only possess certain things when I know that others, who also want to possess similar things, are able to do so. But we know — everyone of us can speak from experience — that such a thing is an impossibility. Therefore, the only thing that can be possessed by all is non-possession, not to have anything whatsoever. In other words, a willing surrender.

You might then well say to me: but you are keeping many things on your body even as you are speaking about voluntary poverty and not possessing anything whatsoever! And your taunt would be right, if you only superficially understood the meaning of the thing that I am speaking about just now. It is really the spirit behind. Whilst you have the body, you will have to have something to clothe the body with also. But then you will take for the body not all that you can get, but the least possible, the least with which you can do. You will take for your house not many mansions, but the least cover that you can do with. And similarly with reference to your food and so on.

Now you see that there is here a daily conflict between what you and we understand today as civilization and the state which I am picturing to you as a state of bliss and a desirable state. On the other hand, the basis of culture for civilization is understood to be the multiplication of all your wants. If you have one room, you will

desire to have two rooms, three rooms, the more the merrier. And similarly, you will want to have as much furniture as you can put in your house, and so on, endlessly. And the more you possess, the better culture you represent, or some such thing. I am putting it, perhaps, not as nicely as the advocates of that civilization would put it, but I am putting it to you in the manner I understand it.

And on the other hand, you find the less you possess, the less you want, the better you are. And better for what? Not for enjoyment of this life, but for enjoyment of personal service to your fellow-beings; service to which you dedicate yourselves, body, soul and mind...even the body is not yours. It has been given to you as a temporary possession, and it can also be taken from you by Him who has given it to you.

Therefore, having that absolute conviction in me, such must be my constant desire that this body also may be surrendered at the will of God, and while it is at my disposal, must be used not for dissipation, not for self-indulgence, not for pleasure, but merely for service and service the whole of your waking hours. And if this is true with reference to the body, how much more with reference to clothing and other things that we use?...

And those who have actually followed out this vow of voluntary poverty to the fullest extent possible (to reach absolute perfection is an impossibility, but the fullest possible extent for a human being), those who have reached the ideal of that state, they testify that when you dispossess yourself of everything you have, you really possess all the treasures of the world. In other words, you really get all that is in reality necessary for you, everything. If food is necessary, food will come to you.

Many of you are men and women of prayer, and I have heard from very many Christian lips that they got their food in answer to prayer, that they get everything in answer to prayer. I believe it. But I want you to come with me a step further and believe with me that those who voluntarily give up everything on earth, including the body — that is to say, have readiness to give up everything

(and they must examine themselves critically, rigidly, and give always an adverse judgement against themselves) — those who will follow this out will really find that they are never in want. . . .

Want must not again be taken literally. God is the hardest taskmaster I have known on this earth, and He tries you through and through. And when you find that your faith is failing or your body is failing you, and you are sinking, He comes to your assistance somehow or other and proves to you that you must not lose your faith and that He is always at your beck and call, but on His terms, not on your terms. So I have found. I cannot really recall a single instance when, at the eleventh hour, He has forsaken me. . . .

Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, G. A. Natesan & Co., (4th Edition), p. 1066.

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“ BLESSED POVERTY ”

(Abridged from *Harijanbandhu*)

Several years ago, a close friend and associate belonging to a rich, prosperous family, who had received a high degree of education and had travelled and seen much in different parts of the world, solemnly abjured the use of all vehicular and other means of transport and has ever since stuck to his resolve through all vicissitudes of weather and health. He has kept up correspondence with me. I have preserved one of his letters which I received during my Harijan tour, in order to share it with the readers of the *Harijanbandhu*. I am sure the following excerpt from it recounting some of his experiences will be appreciated by them :

“ Of the many vows that I took, I have found the one about travelling on foot to be the most beneficial. It has afforded me the richest experience. As a result of it, my faith in God today is much stronger than it was when I set out from Ahmedabad about a couple of years ago.

"Having had experience of both riches and poverty, I am in a position to testify today that, whilst I have almost always found pride and licence threatening the life of the rich and whilst those who wielded authority could not without difficulty escape the intoxication of power, poverty alone left enough scope for a spontaneous and natural devotion to God, a spirit of service and the capacity to suffer and to endure. I have now clearly realized that the state of voluntary poverty is really a blessed state and that riches, in the worldly sense, are nothing in comparison. May God always keep me in poverty and keep me free from the slightest desire for possession or from the care for the morrow.

"Everywhere I have found that men despise the sinning and the fallen and yet who amongst us can claim to be immaculate? I have at last grasped the great secret of shunning sin but not the sinner."

This friend has travelled on foot from Gujarat to and beyond Dehra Dun, has passed through hundreds upon hundreds of villages and come in contact with the villagers. His testimony should, therefore, command our respect. Kindred spirits in all climes and ages have borne similar testimony to the joy and beauty of travelling on foot and renouncing all worldly possessions. Thoreau's *Walden* in praise of walking is well known. All the great reformers of the world who have from time to time effected religious revolutions have eschewed the use of vehicles and walked thousands of miles for delivering their mission. Yet, by the intensity of their faith and the strength of their realization, they were able to achieve what we, in our aeroplane age, with all the gee-gaws at our command, could hardly aspire to. Not mad rush, but unperturbed calmness brings wisdom. This maxim holds as true today as when it was first propounded ages ago.

Harijan, 12-10-'34, p. 273.

THE RICH MAN'S LEGITIMATE POSITION

(Originally appeared in the "Weekly Letter" of M. D. under the caption "The Problem of the Rich")

Pierre Ceresole * and Joe Wilkinson † were with us on the train to Bombay, as they were to sail for Europe on the 23rd. During his stay in Wardha Pierre was busy reading a book in which the Communist author had criticized the doctrine of non-violence. "I do not mind this criticism," he said, "in fact I agree with some of their arguments. But I cannot for the life of me understand why they must try to fortify their position by downright misrepresentation and distortion. I am grieved to say that this book is full of abominable lies. Thus instead of contenting himself with saying that the Gandhian theory has the effect of a bad compromise with capitalism, this man says Gandhi evinces sympathy for the poor and uses it as a cover for his real sympathy for the rich and thus bolsters up capitalism. I have my own doubts about our relation to capitalism and capitalists, but this untruth I cannot understand." On the train Pierre expressed some of these doubts before Gandhiji by thinking aloud.

"Could one lay down a rule of life for the wealthy? That is to say, could one define how much belongs to the rich and how much does not belong to them?"

"Yes," said Gandhiji, smiling. "Let the rich man take 5 per cent or 10 per cent, or 15 per cent."

"But not 85 per cent?"

"Ah! I was thinking of going up to 25 per cent! But not even an exploiter must think of taking 85 per cent!"

Pierre Ceresole's tangible difficulty was how long one should wait in order to carry conviction to the rich man.

* Founder President of the International Voluntary Service.

† Came out at the instance of Deenbandhu Andrews and assisted along with Pierre Ceresole in Bihar Earthquake Relief.

“That is where I disagree with the Communist,” said Gandhiji. “With me the ultimate test is non-violence. We have always to remember that even we were one day in the same position as the wealthy man. It has not been an easy process with us and as we bore with ourselves, even so should we bear with others. Besides, I have no right to assume that I am right and he is wrong. I have to wait until I convert him to my point of view. In the meanwhile if he says, ‘I am prepared to keep for myself 25 per cent and to give 75 per cent to charities,’ I close with the offer. For I know that 75 per cent voluntarily given is better than 100 per cent surrendered at the point of bayonet, and by thus being satisfied with 75 per cent I render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s. Non-violence must be the common factor between us.

“You may argue that a man who surrenders by compulsion today will voluntarily accept the position tomorrow. That, to my mind, is a remote possibility on which I should not care to build much. What is certain is that if I use violence today, I shall be doubtless faced with greater violence. With non-violence as the rule, life will no doubt be a series of compromises. But it is better than an endless series of clashes.”

“How would you in a word describe the rich man’s legitimate position?”

“That of a trustee. I know a number of friends who earn and spend for the poor and who do not regard themselves as anything but trustees of their wealth.”

“I too have a number of friends wealthy and poor. I do not possess wealth but accept money from my wealthy friends. How can I justify myself?”

“You will accept nothing for yourself personally. That is to say, you will not accept a cheque to go to Switzerland for a change but you will accept a lakh of rupees for wells for Harijans or for schools and hospitals for them. All self has got to be eliminated and the problem is simplified.”

“But what about my personal expense?”

“You have to act on the principle that a labourer is worthy of his hire. You must not hesitate to accept your minimum wage. Everyone of us is doing the same thing. Bhansali's wage is just wheat flour and *neem* leaves. We cannot all be Bhansalis, but we can try to approximate to that life. Thus I will be satisfied with having my livelihood, but I must not ask a rich man to accommodate my son. My only concern is to keep my body and soul together so long as I serve the community.”

“But so long as I draw that allowance from him, is it not my duty to remind him continually of the unenviable-ness of his position and to tell him that he must cease to be owner of all that he does not need for his bare living ? ”

“Oh yes, that is your duty.”

“But there are wealthy and wealthy. There are some who may have made their pile from alcoholic traffic.”

“Yes, you will certainly draw a line. But whilst you will not accept money from a brewer, I do not know what will happen if you have made an appeal for funds. Will you tell the people that only those who have justly earned their money will pay ? I would rather withdraw the appeal than expect any money on those terms. Who is to decide whether one is just or otherwise ? And justice too is a relative term. If we will but ask ourselves, we will find that we have not been just all our lives. The Gita says in effect that everyone is tarred with the same brush ; so rather than judge others, live in the world untouched or unaffected by it. Elimination of self is the secret.”

“Yes, I see,” said Pierre Ceresole, and remained silent for a few minutes. Then with a sigh he said : “But one sometimes finds himself in a most embarrassing position. I have met people in Bihar working from morning until evening for less than a couple of annas, sometimes less than an anna, and they have often told me that they would very much like to dispossess the wealthy around them of their ill-gotten gains. I have stood speechless before them by reminding them of you.”

Pierre's doubts were not all resolved. He would have talked on endlessly, if Gandhiji had not been feeling sleepy after a hard day's work. But the deep emotion with which Pierre represented his position, and the deep sorrow that seemed to brood over his brow as he discussed the problem, lifted one into a region where one could not approach wrong without a twitching of the conscience. He did seem to see that the problem resolved itself ultimately into one of non-violence and the extent to which one was prepared to go in the exercise of it.

Harijan, 1-6-'35, p. 121.

90

THE RICH ARE TRUSTEES

(Originally appeared in the columns of "Notes")

A friend writes :

"You will be glad to know that your view about the trusteeship of the rich was anticipated 1300 years ago. The following verse occurs in the sacred *Hadis* :

'Whatever is possessed by people is my property, the poor are my family, the wealthy are the trustees of the riches they possess. Therefore the wealthy persons who will not spend on behalf of my poor children, will go to hades. And I will not worry about them.'

My correspondent's letter which is in Gujarati gives in Gujarati script the whole verse with its translation in Gujarati contained in a newspaper whose name he has not given. Here is the original text in Devanagari :

अल मालु मालो बल फकराओ अयाली बल अग्नियाओ वक्लाई
फमन बखलाब माली अला अयाली उदखलुहुन्नार बला उबाली.

The curious reader will observe that twenty-five per cent of the words are easily understood by a Gujarati reader. In other words, they have become current in the language.

Harijan, 23-9-'39, p. 281.

VOLUNTARY POVERTY *v.* TRUSTEESHIP OF RICHES

(Originally appeared in the columns of "Question Box" under the title "Riches *v.* Poverty")

Q. How is it possible to earn lakhs in a righteous way? Jamnalalji, the merchant prince, used to say it was not. Moreover, however careful a rich man is, he is bound to spend more on himself than his actual requirements merit. Therefore, why not lay more stress on *not* becoming wealthy than on trusteeship of riches?

A. The question is apt and has been put to me before. What Jamnalalji could have meant was in the Gita sense that every action is tainted. It is my conviction that it is possible to acquire riches without consciously doing wrong. For example I may light on a gold mine in my one acre of land. But I accept the proposition that it is better not to desire wealth than to acquire it and become its trustee. I gave up my own long ago, which should be proof enough of what I would like others to do. But what am I to advise those who are already wealthy or who would not shed the desire for wealth? I can only say to them that they should use their wealth for service. It is true that generally the rich spend more on themselves than they need. But this can be avoided. Jamnalalji spent far less on himself than men of his own economic status and even than many middle class men. I have come across innumerable such persons who are stingy on themselves. For some it is a part of their nature to spend next to nothing on themselves, and they do not think that they acquire merit in so doing.

The same applies to the sons of the wealthy. Personally I do not believe in inherited riches. The well-to-do should educate and bring up their children so that they may learn how to be independent. The tragedy is that they do not do so. Their children do get some education,

they even recite verses in praise of poverty, but they have no compunction about helping themselves to parental wealth. That being so, I exercise my common sense and advise what is practicable. Those of us, however, who consider it a duty to adopt poverty and believe in and desire economic equality may not be jealous of the rich but should exhibit real happiness in our poverty which others may emulate. The sad fact is that those who are thus happy are few and far between.

Harijan, 8-3-'42, p. 67.

92

BECOME TRUSTEES AND SERVANTS OF THE POOR

(Extract appearing under the caption "Merchants and Congress" from "Question of Safeguards", a condensed translation of Gandhiji's speech before the Federation of the Indian Chambers of Commerce at the old Council Hall, Delhi, on 7th March, 1931.)

Your President has paid a tribute to the Congress, and suggested, that the Congress should confer with commercial experts in economic matters. I welcome the suggestion. The Congress would always be glad of your advice and help. I may tell you that the Congress does not belong to any particular group of men ; it belongs to all, but the protection of the poor peasantry, which forms the bulk of the population, must be its primary interest. The Congress must, therefore, truly represent the poor. But that does not mean that all other classes—the middle classes, the capitalist or zamindar—must go under. All that it aims at is that all other classes must subserve the interest of the poor. The Congress stands for the industrial prosperity and progress of India. The industrial classes are slowly coming within the Congress fold. During the past year they rendered it help for which we cannot be too grateful. In fact your invitation to me to address you is not due to my name but because I am a humble servant of the Congress and representative of Daridranarayana. I cannot forget the

services rendered by the commercial classes, but I want you to go a step further. I want you to make the Congress your own and we would willingly surrender the reins to you. The work can be better done by you. But if you decide to assume the reins you can do so only on one condition. You should regard yourselves as trustees and servants of the poor. Your commerce must be regulated for the benefit of the toiling millions, or, as Pandit Malaviya would put it, you must be satisfied with earning the 'pure cowrie' i.e. an honest penny. I do not for a moment believe that commercial prosperity is incompatible with strict honesty. I know businessmen who are absolutely honest and scrupulous in their dealings. It is thus easily open to you to take charge of the Congress. You know that there is no constitution more democratic than the Congress Constitution ; it has worked for ten years without a hitch. It is based practically on adult suffrage.

Young India, 16-4-'31, p. 78 at p. 79.

ENJOY THY WEALTH BY RENOUNCING IT

(Discussing the duty of Congress in circumstances similar to the situation in which there was an armed dacoity in a home in the Kheda District, Gandhiji observed in the last two paragraphs of his article "A Deplorable Incident" in *Harijan*, Feb. 1, 1942, p. 20 :)

"...the rich should ponder well as to what is their duty today. They who employ mercenaries to guard their wealth may find those very guardians turning on them. The moneyed classes have got to learn how to fight either with arms or with the weapon of non-violence. For those who wish to follow the latter way the best and most effective *mantram* is : तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः ।" (Enjoy thy wealth by renouncing it). Expanded it means : "Earn your crores by all means. But understand that your wealth is not yours ; it belongs to the people. Take what you require

for your legitimate needs, and use the remainder for society." This truth has hitherto not been acted upon ; but, if the moneyed classes do not even act on it in these times of stress, they will remain the slaves of their riches and passions and consequently of those who overpower them.

" But I have visions that the end of this war will mean also the end of the rule of capital. I see coming the day of the rule of the poor, whether that rule be through force of arms or of non-violence. Let it be remembered that physical force is transitory even as the body is transitory. But the power of the spirit is permanent, even as the spirit is everlasting."

(With reference to the above remarks of Gandhiji, Shri Shankarrao Deo raised a query to which Gandhiji replied in *Harijan* of Feb. 22, 1942 at p. 49 in an article "Not Necessarily Impure", which is reproduced below :)

Thus writes Shri Shankarrao Deo :

" In the last issue of *Harijan*, in your article "A Deplorable Incident" you say to the rich: 'Earn your crores by all means. But understand that your wealth is not yours; it belongs to the people. Take what you require for your legitimate needs and use the remainder for society.' When I read this, the first question that arose in my mind was: Why first earn crores and then use them for society? As society today is constituted the means of earning crores are bound to be impure; and one who earns crores by impure means cannot be expected to follow the *mantram* " तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः । " because in the very process of earning crores by impure means the man's character is bound to be tainted or vitiated. And moreover you have always been emphasizing the purity of means. But I am afraid that there is a possibility of people misunderstanding that you are laying an emphasis here more on the ends than on the means.

" I request you to emphasize as much, if not more, the purity of means of earning money as on spending. If purity of means is strictly observed, then, according to me, crores could not be accumulated at all and the difficulty of spending for society will assume a very minor prospect."

I must demur. Surely a man may conceivably make crores through strictly pure means, assuming that a man may legitimately possess riches. For the purpose of my

argument, I have assumed that private possession itself is not held to be impure. If I own a mining lease and I tumble upon a diamond of rare value, I may suddenly find myself a millionaire without being held guilty of having used impure means. This actually happened when Cullinan diamond, much more valuable than the Kohinoor was found. Such instances can be easily multiplied. My argument was surely addressed to such men. I have no hesitation in endorsing the proposition that generally rich men and for that matter most men are not particular as to the way they make money. In the application of the method of non-violence, one must believe in the possibility of every person, however depraved, being reformed under humane and skilled treatment. We must appeal to the good in human beings and expect response. Is it not conducive to the well-being of society that every member uses all his talents, only not for personal aggrandisement but for the good of all? We do not want to produce a dead equality where every person becomes or is rendered incapable of using his ability to the utmost possible extent. Such a society must ultimately perish. I therefore suggest that my advice that moneyed men may earn their crores (honestly only, of course) but so as to dedicate them to the service of all is perfectly sound. “तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः ।” is a *mantra* based on uncommon knowledge. It is the surest method to evolve a new order of life of universal benefit in the place of the present one where each one lives for himself without regard to what happens to his neighbour.

“TAKE NO THOUGHT OF THE MORROW”

(The following extract is reproduced from an article published under the title “Public Expense”)

When we have developed... ‘be careful for nothing’ attitude, we shall be saved from many a botheration and trouble and freedom will dance attendance upon us. Nor should one suppose that a ‘careful for nothing’ person shall have always to be starving. God that provides the little ant its speck of food and to the elephant his daily one maund bolus will not neglect to provide man with his daily meal. Nature’s creatures do not worry or fret about tomorrow but simply wait on tomorrow for the daily sustenance. Only man in his overweening pride and egotism imagines himself to be the lord and master of the earth and goes on piling up for himself goods that perish. Nature tries every day by its rude shocks to wean him from his pride but he refuses to shed it. Satyagraha is a specific for bringing home to one the lesson of humility.

Young India, 21-5-'31, p. 118.

TOWARDS NON-POSSESSION

(From “Quick Response” in “Notes”)

Why should all of us possess property? Why should not we after a certain time dispossess ourselves of all property? Unscrupulous merchants do this for dishonest purposes. Why may we not do it for a moral and a great purpose? For a Hindu it was the usual thing at a certain stage. Every good Hindu is expected after having lived the household life for a certain period to enter upon a life of non-possession of property. Why may we not revive the noble tradition? In effect it merely amounts to this that for maintenance we place ourselves at the mercy of those

to whom we transfer our property. To me the idea is attractive. In the innumerable cases of such honourable trust there is hardly one case in a million of abuse of trust. Of course, there are moral considerations arising out of such transactions. Take the instance of father and son. If the son is as good a non-co-operator as the father why should the father tempt his son by burdening him with ownership of property? Such considerations will always arise and the moral worth of a person is tested by his ability in delicately balancing cross problems of ethics. How such a practice can be worked without giving a handle to dishonest persons can only be determined after long experimenting. No one however need be deterred from trying the experiment for the fear of the example being abused. The divine author of the Gita was not deterred from delivering the message of the "Song Celestial" although he probably knew that it would be tortured to justify every variety of vice including murder.

Young India, 3-7-'24, p. 221.

THE DUTY OF CAPITALISTS

Sjt. Ghanashyamdas Birla, presiding the other day, at the Maharashtra Merchants' Conference (Sholapur) delivered a speech that was noteworthy for the freedom with which he expressed his opinions....

Speaking on the duty of capitalists he presented an ideal which it will be difficult even for a labour man to improve upon. Pleading for unity among the merchant class, he said :

"But let me make it clear that the unity which I propose for the businessmen should be unity for service and not for exploitation. The modern capitalist has been much abused of late. In fact he is being looked upon at present as belonging to a separate class. But in the days of yore the situation was something quite different. If we analyse the functions of the Vaishya of the ancient times, we find that he was assigned the duty of

production and distribution not for personal gain but for common good. All the wealth that he amassed, he held as a trustee for the nation. Capitalists, if they are to fulfil their real function, must exist not as exploiters but as servants of society. No Communism or Bolshevism can thrive if we know and discharge our duty. If I may say so, it is we who provided a fertile soil for the development of Communism and Bolshevism by relegating our duty to the background. If we knew our duty and followed it faithfully, I am sure that we could save society from many evils. I have mentioned that our true function is to produce and distribute.... Let us produce and distribute for the service of the community. Let us live and be prepared, if it comes to that, to sacrifice ourselves for the common good."

Young India, 19-12-'29, p. 413.

97

SPECIAL INTERESTS

(From Gandhiji's second speech at the Federal Structure Committee of the Second Round Table Conference, London, published under the title "A Gentle Complaint".)

I come to sub-head (v), *representation by special constituencies of special interests*. Under adult suffrage, certainly labour units, and so on, do not require any special representation; landlords most decidedly no, and I will give you my reason. There is no desire on the part of the Congress, and there is no desire on the part of these dumb paupers, to dispossess landlords of their possessions, but they would have landlords to act as trustees for the tenants. I think that it should be a matter of pride for the landlords to feel that their ryots, these millions of villagers, would prefer them as their candidates and as their representatives than others coming from other parts or someone from among themselves.

Therefore what will happen is that the landlords will have to make common cause with the ryots, and what can be nobler, what can be better, than that they should do so? But if the landlords insisted on special treatment and

special representation in either Chamber, if there are two Chambers, or in the one popular Chamber, I am afraid that they would be really throwing an apple of discord into our midst, and I am hoping that no such claim would be put forward on behalf of the landlords or any such interest.

Young India, 8-10-'31, p. 296 at p. 298.

98

LAWFUL POSSESSION

(Originally appeared under the title "Non-possession or Poverty")

Non-possession is allied to non-stealing. A thing, not originally stolen, must nevertheless be classified as stolen property, if we possess it without needing it. Possession implies provision for the future. A seeker after Truth, a follower of the Law of Love cannot hold anything against tomorrow. God never stores for the morrow. He never creates more than what is strictly needed for the moment. If therefore, we repose faith in His providence, we should rest assured that He will give us everyday our daily bread, meaning everything that we require. Saints and devotees, who have lived in such faith, have always derived a justification for it from their experience. Our ignorance or negligence of the Divine Law, which gives to man from day to day his daily bread and no more, has given rise to inequalities with all the miseries attendant upon them. The rich have a superfluous store of things which they do not need, and which are therefore neglected and wasted; while millions are starved to death for want of sustenance. If each retained possession only of what he needed, no one would be in want, and all would live in contentment. As it is, the rich are discontented no less than the poor. The poor man would fain become a millionaire, and the millionaire a multi-millionaire. The rich should take the initiative in dispossession with a view to a universal diffusion of the spirit of contentment. If only they keep their own property within moderate limits the starving will be

easily fed, and will learn the lesson of contentment along with the rich. Perfect fulfilment of the ideal of non-possession requires, that man should, like the birds, have no roof over his head, no clothing and no stock of food for the morrow. He will indeed need his daily bread, but it will be God's business, and not his, to provide it. Only the fewest possible, if any at all, can reach this ideal. We ordinary seekers may not be repelled by the seeming impossibility. But we must keep the ideal constantly in view, and in the light thereof, critically examine our possessions, and try to reduce them. Civilization, in the real sense of the term, consists not in the multiplication, but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants. This alone promotes real happiness and contentment, and increases the capacity for service. Judging by this criterion, we find, that in the Ashram we possess many things, the necessity for which cannot be proved and we thus tempt our neighbours to thieve.

From the standpoint of pure Truth, the body too is a possession. It has been truly said, that desire for enjoyment creates bodies for the soul. When this desire vanishes, there remains no further need for the body, and man is free from the vicious cycle of births and deaths. The soul is omnipresent, why should she care to be confined within the cagelike body, or do evil and even kill for the sake of that cage? We thus arrive at the ideal of total renunciation, and learn to use the body for the purposes of service so long as it exists, so much so that service, and not bread, becomes with us the staff of life. We eat and drink, sleep and wake, for service alone. Such an attitude of mind brings us real happiness, and the beatific vision in the fulness of time. Let us all examine ourselves from this standpoint.

We should remember, that non-possession is a principle applicable to thoughts, as well as to things. A man who fills his brain with useless knowledge violates that inestimable principle. Thoughts, which turn us away from

God, or do not turn us towards Him, constitute impediments in our way. In this connection we may consider the definition of knowledge contained in the 13th chapter of the Gita. We are there told, that humility (*amanitvam*) etc., constitute knowledge, and all the rest is ignorance. If this is true, — and there is no doubt that it is true — much that we hug today as knowledge is ignorance pure and simple, and therefore only does us harm, instead of conferring any benefit. It makes the mind wander, and even reduces it to a vacuity, and discontent flourishes in endless ramifications of evil. Needless to say, this is not a plea for inertia. Every moment of our life should be filled with mental or physical activity, but that activity should be *sattvika*, tending to Truth. One who has consecrated his life to service cannot be idle for a single moment. But we have to learn to distinguish between good activity and evil activity. This discernment goes naturally with a single-minded devotion to service.

From Yeravda Mandir, Chap. VI.

DEFENCE OF LAWFUL POSSESSION

(Originally appeared in the columns of "Question Box" under the caption of "The Eternal Problem")

Q. Why can't you see that whilst there is possession it must be defended against all odds? Therefore your insistence that violence should be eschewed in all circumstances is utterly unworkable and absurd. I think non-violence is possible only for select individuals.

A. This question has been answered often enough in some form or other in these columns as also in those of *Young India*. But it is an evergreen. I must answer it as often as it is put especially when it comes from an earnest seeker as this one does. I claim that even now, though the social structure is not based on a conscious acceptance of non-violence, all the world over mankind lives and men retain their possessions on the sufferance of one another.

If they had not done so, only the fewest and the most ferocious would have survived. But such is not the case. Families are bound together by ties of love, and so are groups in the so-called civilized society called nations. Only they do not recognize the supremacy of the law of non-violence. It follows, therefore, that they have not investigated its vast possibilities. Hitherto out of sheer inertia, shall I say, we have taken for granted that complete non-violence is possible only for the few who take the vow of non-possession and the allied abstinences. Whilst it is true that the votaries alone can carry on research work and declare from time to time the new possibilities of the great eternal law governing man, if it is the law, it must hold good for all. The many failures we see are not of the law but of the followers, many of whom do not even know that they are under that law willy nilly. When a mother dies for her child she unknowingly obeys the law. I have been pleading for the past fifty years for a conscious acceptance of the law and its zealous practice even in the face of failures. Fifty years' work has shown marvellous results and strengthened my faith. I do claim that by constant practice we shall come to a state of things when lawful possession will command universal and voluntary respect. No doubt such possession will not be tainted. It will not be an insolent demonstration of the inequalities that surround us everywhere. Nor need the problem of unjust and unlawful possessions appal the votary of non-violence. He has at his disposal the non-violent weapon of Satyagraha and non-co-operation which hitherto has been found to be a complete substitute of violence whenever it has been applied honestly in sufficient measure. I have never claimed to present the complete science of non-violence. It does not lend itself to such treatment. So far as I know no single physical science does, not even the very precise science of mathematics. I am but a seeker and I have fellow-seekers like the questioner whom I invite to accompany me in the very difficult but equally fascinating search.

Harijan, 22-2-'42, p. 48.

DISPOSSESSION OF ILL-GOTTEN GAINS

(From "Weekly Letter" of M. D.)

One of the questions put by the students of the Village Workers' Training School was :

"How to dispossess people of ill-gotten gains which is what the Socialists are out to do?"

Gandhiji replied: "Who is to judge what gains or riches are ill-gotten or well-gotten? God alone can judge, or a competent authority appointed both by the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' can judge. Not anyone and everyone. But if you say that all property and possession is theft, all must give up property and wealth. Have we given it up? Let us make a beginning expecting the rest to follow. For those who are convinced that their own possessions are ill-gotten, there is of course no other alternative but to give them up.

Harijan, 1-8-'36, p. 193 at p. 195.

IF THE HAVES DO NOT BECOME TRUSTEES

(Originally appeared in the columns of "Question Box")

Q. You say that a raja, a zamindar or a capitalist should be a trustee for the poor. Do you think that any such exists today? Or do you expect them to be transformed?

A. I think that some very few exist even today, though not in the full sense of the term. They are certainly moving in that direction. It can, however, be asked whether the present rajas and others can be expected to become trustees of the poor. If they do not become trustees

of their own accord, force of circumstances will compel the reform unless they court utter destruction. When *panchayat raj* is established, public opinion will do what violence can never do. The present power of the zamindars, the capitalists and the rajas can hold sway so long as the common people do not realize their own strength. If the people non-co-operate with the evil of zamindari or capitalism, it must die of inanition. In *panchayat raj* only the *panchayat* will be obeyed and the *panchayat* can only work through the law of their making.

Harijan, 1-7-'47, p. 172.

102

AVERT THE DISASTER

(Originally appeared under the caption of "Zamindars and Talukdars")

Nothing, during the recent U. P. tour pleased me more than the way in which several young zamindars and talukdars had simplified their lives and fired by patriotic zeal were easing the burden of the ryots. I had heard fearful accounts of the alleged atrocities of many zamindars and their mode of levying cesses, legal and illegal on all conceivable occasions with the result that the ryot was reduced to serfdom pure and simple. The discovery therefore of so many young talukdars was a very pleasant surprise to me.

But the improvement has to go further and be thorough. There is yet even among the best of them a wide gulf between themselves and the ryots. There is yet a great deal of patronizing and self-satisfaction over the little that has been done. The fact is that whatever may be done is no more than a belated return to the ryots of their due. The hideous caricature of *varnashrama* is responsible for the air of superiority that the so-called Kshatriya assumes and the status of inherited inferiority

the poor ryot submissively accepts as his deserved lot in life. If Indian society is to make real progress along peaceful lines there must be a definite recognition on the part of the moneyed class that a ryot possesses the same soul that they do and that their wealth gives them no superiority over the poor. They must regard themselves even as the Japanese nobles did, as trustees holding their wealth for the good of their wards, the ryots. Then they would take no more than a reasonable amount as commission for their labours. At present there is no proportion between the wholly unnecessary pomp and extravagance of the moneyed class and the squalid surroundings and the grinding pauperism of the ryots in whose midst the former are living. A model zamindar would at once therefore reduce much of the burden the ryot is now bearing. He would come in intimate touch with the ryots and know their wants and inject hope into them in place of despair which is killing the very life out of them. He will not be satisfied with the ryots' ignorance of the laws of sanitation and hygiene. He would reduce himself to poverty in order that the ryot may have the necessities of life. He will study the economic condition of the ryots under his care, establish schools in which he will educate his own children side by side with those of the ryots. He will purify the village well and the village tank. He will teach the ryot to sweep his roads and clean his latrines by himself doing this necessary labour. He will throw open without reserve his own gardens for the unrestricted use of the ryot. He will use as hospital, school or the like most of the unnecessary buildings which he keeps for his pleasure. If only the capitalist class will read the signs of the times, revise their notions of God-given right to all they possess, in an incredibly short space of time the seven hundred thousand dung-heaps which today pass muster as villages can be turned into abodes of peace, health and comfort. I am convinced that the capitalist, if he follows the Samurai of Japan, has nothing really to lose and everything to gain.

There is no other choice than between voluntary surrender on the part of the capitalist of superfluities and consequent acquisition of the real happiness of all on the one hand, and on the other, the impending chaos into which, if the capitalist does not wake up betimes, awakened but ignorant, famishing millions will plunge the country and which, not even the armed force that a powerful government can bring into play, can avert. I have hoped that India will successfully avert the disaster. The privilege I had of meeting intimately some of the young talukdars in the U. P. has strengthened the hope.

Young India, 5-12-'29, p. 396.

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